

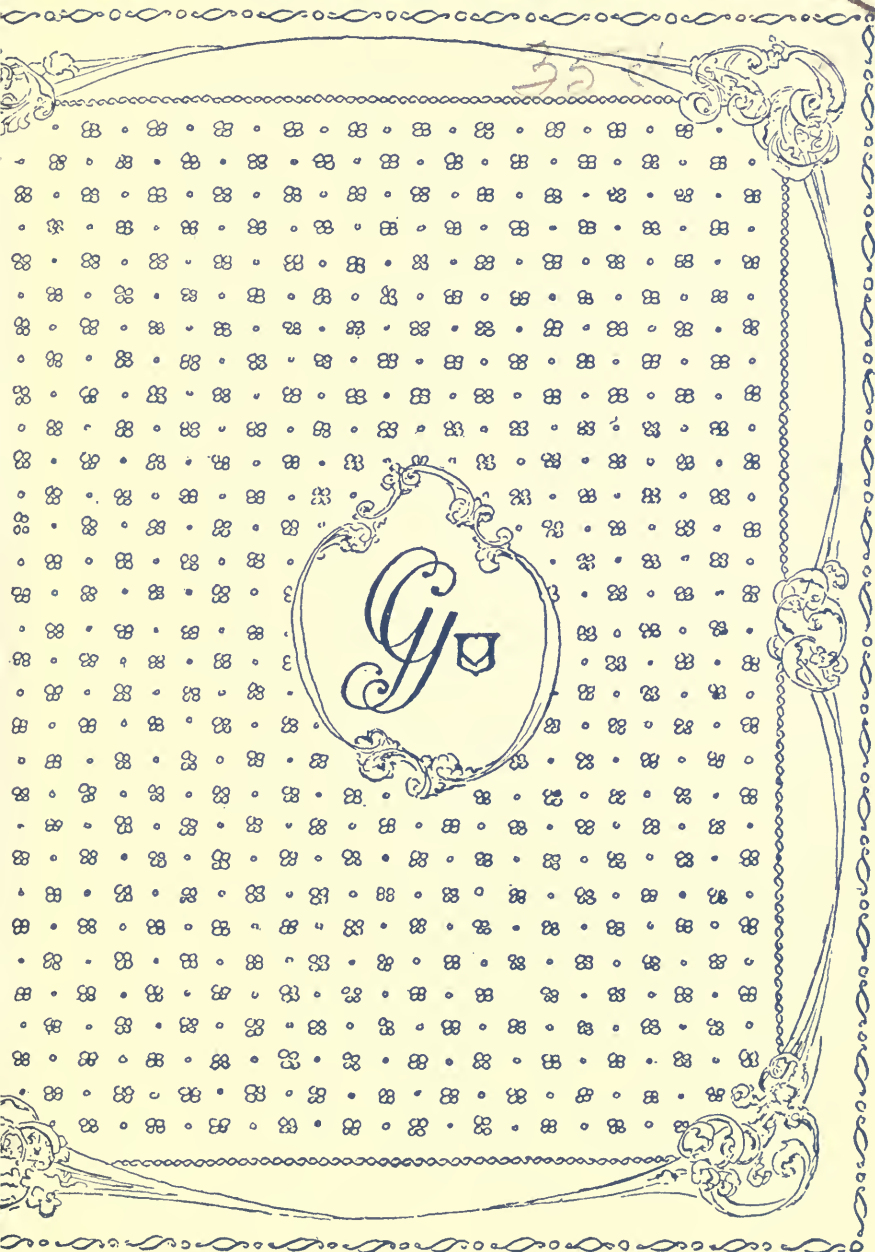
*The* **GIRL** *and*  
*the*  
**GUARDSMAN**



**Alexander Black**



Miss C. Viola Carlson





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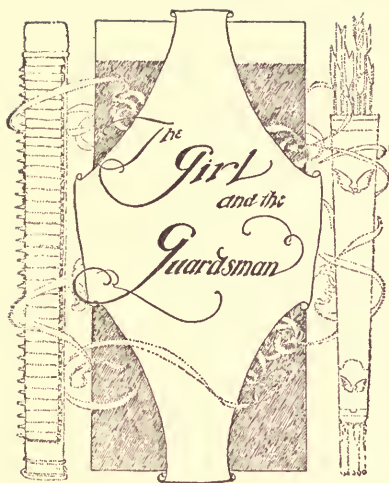
# The Illustrations

FRONTISPIECE . . . . . *Facing Title*

|                                                                            | <i>Facing Page</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| “ Amanda Maud had a book in her lap ” . .                                  | 2                  |
| “ “ Did you know the soldier? ” ” . . . .                                  | 8                  |
| “ The thought of Barton would not be put<br>away ” . . . . .               | 12                 |
| “ “ Nothing has happened to Edith? ” ” — . .                               | 28                 |
| “ “ I will promise not to sit on the table any<br>more ” ” . . . . .       | 40                 |
| “ “ Now, be calm for a moment, Barton ” ” .                                | 44                 |
| “ “ Don’t speak! ” she commanded tremulously ”                             | 52                 |
| “ When he had sketched her in the green vista<br>of the valley ” . . . . . | 60                 |
| “ Yes, it was Marcus Hadleigh ” . . . .                                    | 64                 |
| “ “ What are you doing with your gun? ” ” .                                | 72                 |
| “ “ It ’s all right, Joe, I ’m the real thing ’ ” .                        | 86                 |
| “ “ Amanda, you ain’t got no patriotism in<br>you ’ ” . . . . .            | 98                 |

# THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

|                                                                      | <i>Facing Page</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| “ Hadleigh’s face was bending over him ” . . .                       | 108                |
| “ The train worried and sickened him ” . . .                         | 110                |
| “ It was like trying to forget his fever ” . . .                     | 120                |
| “ But she had passed down the stair ” . . .                          | 125                |
| “ Re-reading a letter from Joe ” . . . . .                           | 130                |
| “ ‘ You need n’t ’a’ been so rough, Amanda!’ ”                       | 132                |
| “ Her uncle paused at the door ” . . . . .                           | 150                |
| “ ‘ What does she suggest?’ demanded Barton ”                        | 156                |
| “ ‘ You should take my word ’ ” . . . . .                            | 168                |
| “ It was Amanda Maud ” . . . . .                                     | 186                |
| “ Nothing was what it had been ” . . . . .                           | 198                |
| “ ‘ It is after twelve o’clock, and you are<br>elected ’ ” . . . . . | 210                |





# PART ONE



**A**MANDA MAUD WIGGINS had a book in her lap and something on her mind. Amanda Maud was seated on the floor, her feet crossed like a Turk's or a tailor's, her knees improvising a book-rack. Only Providence knows why the book was Milton. Certainly Milton never was more

completely encompassed by femininity.

The girl had looked into various volumes which lay near the open bookcase. She had pursued the un-literary method of review which consists in opening the book in the middle and letting the pages spin under the thumb. Nothing which she had discovered by this exhaustive system of examination had definitely aroused her interest in the books at hand. Nor had an occasional struggle with a whole page of verse, here and there, seemed to gratify the impulse which had led her, after dusting the bookcase daily for some months, finally to search its contents.

Yes, these pluckings from the tree of literature had for Amanda Maud a



*"Amanda Maud had a  
book in her lap."*



flat taste, when they did not repel her by a puckery flavor. Such is the fate of books.

When Miss Lynwood came into the library she was not astonished to find Amanda Maud on the floor, since that position entirely conformed to the girl's habit, but Miss Lynwood was not wholly free from a sense of curiosity as to the books.

"Amanda," said Miss Lynwood, in a tone designed, perhaps, to elicit confidences, "I never knew that you cared for the poets."

"I don't, Miss Edith," admitted Amanda. "I can't see 's there 's much in them — just a lot of words. There 's one man here don't seem to know even how to make his words rhyme together. I wonder people waste so much good money in books."

There's more fair readin' in the almanac, I think."

"Perhaps, Amanda, you did n't find the right poets. There are all sorts, you know."

"Maybe," said Amanda, absently staring at Miss Lynwood's back hair. Presently Amanda broke out with: "Miss Lynwood, what is love, anyway?"

Miss Lynwood turned to gaze at Amanda's round, unemotional countenance. "Amanda, how long have you been in this state?"

"Ever since I came from Pennsylvania, Miss Edith."

Miss Lynwood chuckled. "I did n't mean that, Amanda. How long have you been wondering what love is?"

"O," returned Amanda, liberating

an enigmatical smile. "I don't know 's I could tell you exactly." Then a new whimsical gleam crept into her eyes, "It 's been comin' on quite a while."

Miss Lynwood was adjusting some flowers at the window. "Amanda," she said presently, "it is very dangerous when it comes on gradually like that."

"Is it, Miss Edith?" Amanda was following the girl at the window, following in her big-eyed, unanalytical way the fine, serious profile, the soft, steady look, the cut of the lips that contradicted their own smile. "Well, before I knowed Joe Gribsey I never thought of such things, and that 's no lie."

"Joe Gribsey?" repeated Miss Lynwood. "Amanda, I don't be-

lieve there is such a person. I haven't seen him, and I don't believe you have. You have just imagined him, or read of him in a book."

This seemed to amuse Amanda Maud. "You're dead wrong, Miss Edith. There's a Joe Gribsey, all right. You never seen him, because he can't get out."

"Can't get out? Why, where is he? He isn't a—a prisoner, is he?"

"No, Miss Edith, he's only a janitor. He can't get out only about one night in the month, so mostly I go and see him now."

Miss Lynwood's eyelids twitched. "You are very good to him, Amanda. I hope he appreciates your great consideration for him."

"I guess he does, Miss Edith.

He lets on to be pretty far gone. But you can't tell."

"Where is your janitor, Amanda?"

Amanda knitted her heavy brows and nibbled at her finger. It was characteristic that she should fail in such exact knowledge. "I forget the name of the buildin'. There's a lot of studios on the top floor. Generally I see Joe up there. It's nice and quiet. There's one studio that nobody's been in for a long time. The artist went away to be a soldier. And he was killed."

Miss Lynwood seated herself near her flowers. "What was his name, Amanda?"

"I don't know's I could remember—O yes!" pursued Amanda, delighted at her feat of recollection, "Barton, Miss Edith; his name's on

the door. Joe often speaks about him. He says that the soldier said if he died the place was to be kept just as it was for a friend of his'n who was to come from Europe or somewhere — why, what's the matter, Miss Edith." Miss Lynwood's head had drooped until it touched her hand. "Did you — did you know the soldier?"

"Yes, Amanda."

"O — was he the one? Somebody told me" . . .

Miss Lynwood was silent, though she lifted her head again resolutely.

"It's too bad," murmured Amanda, uncomfortably. "It's too bad. I guess Joe did n't know about that. . . . No, I guess he did n't. But don't you care, Miss Edith. There's lots more. That's what I tell Joe



“Did you know the  
soldier?”



when he says I never would find anybody to think as much of me as he does and wait so long."

"I wonder if you love Joe Gribsey, Amanda?" Miss Lynwood was staring through the window, out across the garden to the low hills and the September sky, a bitter humor wrenching her lips. Then she forgot her own question.

"Well, now that's just what I don't know, Miss Edith. I tell him I must think a good deal of him to climb five flights of steps and sit in a lonesome place to talk to him. But he's such a fool; you know what I mean, Miss Edith. He ain't got no *sense*. Mother says that most men are that way. Then the next minute she tells me it's a pity I can't find somebody'll have me."

Edith was not listening. Her thoughts were away to an October night when she bade her soldier good-bye ; to that frightful day in January when news came that he had fallen during a desperate struggle in the thickets of Luzon ; to that poignantly bright day in March when the troop came home — came home without him ; to that mellow day in August, one of those days that urge us to forget, when Hadleigh, his friend and fellow trooper, had asked her to marry him.

A thousand times in the brief weeks that had passed since then she had asked herself whether her answer to Hadleigh was a disloyalty to the dead, whether, indeed, it was not a disloyalty to Hadleigh, who knew of the betrothal, but who

scarcely could know all that it meant to her. She had tried to tell Hadleigh everything, but the protest of a woman who yields is an empty protest. She had let the genuineness of Hadleigh's devotion justify her in forgetting her own ideals. Her conscience resented that forgetfulness, and her punishment already had begun. The thought of Barton would not be put away. Her fancy had followed every turn of his fortunes in those first days. She had liked to think that she was not sentimental; but some of that confidence had gone. After the news came, there was a horrible period, black as the blackest night, in which she saw his dead face lying among the weeds, and some terrible wound . . .

“ My dear ! ”

Mr. Amos Tibbetts stood in the library door, his shaven lips working impatiently, the tufts of gray hair that winged his countenance quivering in unwonted excitement.

“ My dear — where is she ? ”

“ Who, uncle ? ”

“ Where is she ? Where is that exasperating creature who does work and mischief about this house ? ”

“ Amanda Maud, uncle ? ”

“ She ’s broken into my room again ! ” —

“ But, uncle ! ” —

“ Broken in, I say, and gone through like a cyclone. Ye gods ! but these things try a man’s soul ! I can’t find any of my papers ! There were two bonds on the desk. Heaven knows where *they* have gone ! Burned,



*“The thought of Barton would  
not be put away.”*



probably, or otherwise sacrificed to a savage frenzy for *cleaning up*! I tell you" —

"I hope they are not destroyed, uncle," murmured Edith, with real solicitude.

"I told that fanatic," pursued Mr. Tibbetts, "never, on pain of death, to clean up my room again. This morning I took the additional precaution of locking my door. But she either picked the lock or climbed the lattice of the porch and got in through the window."

"O, what a whopper!"

Amanda appeared between the door curtains in an attitude of pained if outwardly composed resentment. "I never picked no lock and I never climbed no porch. You didn't fasten your door the second time

you went out, Mr. Tibbetts, and it was disgraceful in there."

Mr. Tibbetts was a short, round man, with a baby smoothness in his face, eyes usually mild in expression, if surmounted by brows which in his later years suggested a fretful habit. He now fastened upon the housemaid a glance of concentrated scorn.

"Amanda," he said, with uncertain calmness, "I have told you repeatedly, and in plain United States, that I did n't want to be cleaned up, put in order, or otherwise driven to drink by your infernal dust-brush upheavals."

"Why, Amanda!" interposed Edith, not without hope of averting serious hostilities, "I told you never to do anything but make the bed in Uncle Amos's room."

“Yes, I know, Miss Edith, but it did look so *indecent* this mornin’.”

“What is that to you?” demanded Mr. Tibbetts, in a voice that was intended to be thunderous. “Can’t I be indecent if I want to without soliciting your permission? Listen to me: If I ever find you in that room again, I’ll — yes, sir, I’ll pitch you into the garden! Do you understand? — pitch you into the garden!”

“O, dear!” murmured Amanda, her imperturbable face searching, it might seem, for some appropriate expression of dread, “I would n’t have thought” —

“Where are my bonds?” interrupted Mr. Tibbetts, in a new thunder.

“Your what, sir?”

“My bonds!”

“Don’t ask me. I did n’t take nothin’.”

“Perhaps not, but where did you put them?”

Amanda shook her head. “I only cleaned up the place.”

“Yes,” snorted Uncle Amos, “that’s all — just heaved things around, just tossed valuable documents and priceless memoranda into crazy places, pitchforked papers and letters into cracks and corners where I shall never find them — that’s all!”

“Uncle,” pleaded Edith, “Amanda and I will go and look for the bonds. I am sure that Amanda will never disturb your room again.”

“I wish I had your hopeful disposition!” cried Uncle Amos, as they left him. “You don’t know her. She’ll be at it again, unless you bar

the door, fasten on iron safety shutters, and put her in chains — in the cellar! Only *cleaned up the place!*” and Mr. Tibbetts, with a final snort, stalked out into the garden, where he ruminated savagely among his chrysanthemums.

He might have enjoyed the thought of Amanda confronted by her own devastation, had it been possible to fancy that creature as possessing a sensibility that might be assailed by remorse. It was but too clear that the derangement of his room had afforded her a superior feminine joy, that she applied herself to the rescue of his sanctuary as a religious enthusiast might have applied herself to the salvation of his soul.

It occurred to him to wonder, as it had a score of times before, what had implanted this form of vice in woman,

why it was a form of vice so distinctively feminine. In what avenue of psychological study was a man to find explanation for that form of perversity in women which makes them assail the natural symmetry of man's surroundings under the sad hallucination that they are restoring order? Could any longing be more pathetic or more maddening than that to which women yield when they inflict upon an absent or subdued man the monumental irony known as cleaning up? The whole problem was profoundly inexplicable.

When Edith came down the path she had the missing papers in her hand. "And Amanda has promised, uncle, never to do it again."

"Don't you believe her, my dear," growled Uncle Amos, taking his

bonds resignedly, "the appetite is too strongly rooted. You can't eradicate those cravings so easily. She may swear to reform, and she may mean it. I have known those things to happen. But in a few days, at some critical juncture, when I have the topography of my effects firmly fixed, the appetite will seize her once more, and then it will be the old story. O, I see, my dear, that you don't feel the annoyance of these things"—

"I assure you, uncle," protested Edith, but Uncle Amos had a keen glance.

"Yes, I know, I know. Nevertheless, you don't feel—you can't feel—the gravity of this thing. It is not to be expected. You are too young, and you are a woman yourself. Your superior sense may restrain you,

but your instinct, doubtless, dulls your resentment for this form of destructiveness."

"Uncle, I don't wish to appear unsympathetic, but should n't you pardon something to the spirit of order — even if it is imperfectly expressed by poor Amanda?"

"Order!" returned Uncle Amos, with a fretful turn; "order! That's just it! You call this devastation order! — But you can't reason about these things with a woman! You can't make her see that the true order is the condition that she disturbs. It is useless. I tell you, Edith, that if a woman made the world, all trees would grow in straight lines, every hill would be symmetrically conical, every river would move at true angles. A feminine creator would have placed

the planets in a proper curve, the largest at one end, the smallest at the other, have straightened the handle of the Dipper and mopped up the Milky Way. Science has tried to explain the thing a thousand times by saying that she has no constructive sense. But of course you can't explain a woman. It would be sacrilegious presumption."

"It is dreadful, uncle, to think that we have staggered science in this way, but you must take my word that we are trying to do better. At all events, you have Amanda's promise, and you have mine. Things will go better."

"You mean, I suppose, that they will not go,—that they will be let alone. I hope so. I am an optimist, after all. I really believe you."

Then Mr. Tibbetts looked up. Edith was in a quiet mood despite her banter.

“I am going out for a little while,” she said presently. “But I shall be back very soon. I am expecting a caller at four. Amanda will be away.”

“Thank heaven!” muttered Mr. Tibbetts.

“If Mr. Hadleigh calls will you tell him” —

“That you slipped out?”

“No — that I am expecting him.”

“Yes, yes.” Uncle Amos gave her a furtive glance. He followed her toward the house. The mention of Hadleigh’s name had set him thinking. That Hadleigh affair was all right, of course. Why not? It was a wholly satisfactory solution of the

difficulty. Yet Edith was strangely, ominously quiet at times. She did not seem happy. She was not the Edith she had been in those other days—in the Barton era. No, she certainly had changed. Even her occasional lightness could not be trusted. It was not real. “She thinks too much about the other one,” said Mr. Tibbetts to himself, and this was a fact to be regretted, to be resented.

Why should a girl harbor a sentimental notion of this sort?—for it was sentimental. Mr. Tibbetts stood at the window staring down the road in the direction of her vanishing figure, watching the pale flicker of her gown against the dull greens of the fading season. That other affair was ended,—ended in the one final, irre-

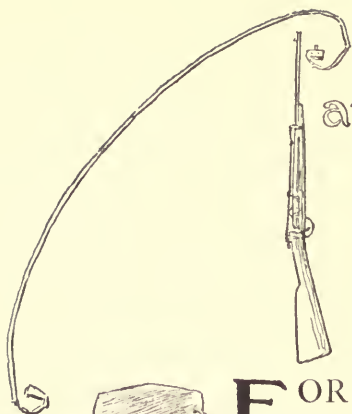
trievable way. When a man is dead he is dead, and that is the end of it. Whimpering will not fetch him back.

Unanswerable, Uncle Amos, but what is this at the library door? What is this image in khaki outlined against the shadow of the hall? It might have been the image of Uncle Amos's thought, but it was not. It was a living image—Uncle Amos might have heard its deep breathing had he been less engrossed by his reverie.

Edith, reasoned Uncle Amos, with a feeling of being entirely judicial, had been wise to accept Hadleigh. Hadleigh was a good fellow. There were a score of reasons why a girl's second choice should be better than her first. Why should she be satisfied? "And yet," Uncle Amos shook

his head slowly, regretfully, "she thinks too much about the other one."

*The other one* — heavens! was this he — Barton in the flesh, Barton extending his hand, Barton the dead back to life, Barton crying, "How are you, Uncle Amos? Don't you know me in this rig?"



## Part Two



**F**OR the length of an incredulous moment Uncle Amos was speechless. “My God!” he gasped at last. “Barton! you alive?” Then following the impulse to fortify his doubt he faltered, “How did you get in?” If Barton had dropped through the ceiling he certainly might not be real.

“Get in, Uncle Amos? Blew in at the side gate, as usual!”

“ And you — you actually are alive, Barton ? You ” —

“ Yes, Uncle Amos, alive and kicking — at the time it took to get here. You all thought I was dead — and I did have a close call ” —

“ But, Barton — the despatches ” —

“ The despatches lied and my letter didn't go. Everything went wrong. Where 's Edith ? ”

“ Edith ? ” Uncle Amos's arms dropped. “ O, yes, Edith ” — a new emotion seized the man. “ Barton — this is very unfortunate ! ”

“ Unfortunate ? Mr. Tibbetts ” —

“ Understand me, Barton ” —

“ I am reported dead,” went on the soldier, scanning the other resentfully, a mystification behind his resentment ; “ and I am not dead. I have had a rough time squeezing back into

the troop of the living, and a devilish journey home ” —

“ Ah ! Barton ! you don’t see ” —

“ Mr. Tibbetts — what ’s wrong ? Nothing has happened to Edith ? She is not ” —

“ No, my boy, she is n’t yet — but ” —

“ Is n’t yet ? Is she ill ? Tell me ! ”

“ No, no ! But can’t you see ! — you are supposed to be dead. To all appearances you have been dead, Barton.”

“ I admit that.”

“ And you have been dead — as it were — for quite a time, and during that period — well, you can see, Barton, that if one man dies, a young woman might take up with another. She can’t ” —

Barton moved impatiently. “ Pardon me, Mr. Tibbetts,” he cried,



*“ ‘Nothing has happened  
to Edith?’ ”*



catching the older man by the sleeve, "I don't want to be rough, but have it out. What are you driving at? You don't mean" —

"Yes, I do, Barton. Edith has accepted another man."

The soldier shrank as if he had received a sharp blow. "Whom?" he then demanded.

"Hadleigh," returned Mr. Tibbetts. "Eh — you knew him, Barton?"

The soldier walked to the window, folding his arms with a quivering gesture. "O, yes! He is my friend. . . . She did n't wait very long."

"He did n't wait very long, Barton. That was the way of it. And so it was settled. You can see at a glance how unfortunate your coming home is."

Barton nodded slowly. "How unfortunate!" Then he swung about as if to discover whether this was not a misplaced jest. "This is a cheerful welcome, Mr. Tibbetts, for a man returned from the grave. But your joke is untimely. In all of that long struggle back to life, throughout the bitterness of my disappointment in finding that my letter had not left the hospital, during all of those hard weeks on the sea and this journey from the coast, I have had one thought to lift and nerve me. I have seen the light of this house, the dearer light of her eyes. And when at last I cross the threshold it is to be told that I am a disaster" —

"But, Barton, you don't understand how dreadfully untimely, what an awkward moment" —

Again Barton caught him by the arm. "Mr. Tibbetts! — if you are concealing anything, if you are deceiving me — She is n't being married — to-day?" —

"No, no, Barton, not that. Be calm, my boy, be calm; you must admit that nothing is to be gained by rashness. The fact is that she is engaged to the other man."

"Believing me dead."

"Yes; but don't be too positive in your inferences, Barton. Very important things have happened in these eight months. As a result of this new alliance — now, understand me, Barton, I am simply unfolding the facts, placing before you the history of the situation."

"I am listening."

"As a result, I say, of this new

alliance, the Hadleigh crowd has thawed out in a wonderful way."

"What is that to me?" hurled Barton. "Am I to be comforted by the fact that there is a freeze or a thaw in the Hadleigh family?"

"No, my boy, but Hadleigh's father is a powerful man, and he has seen a pretty chance to do a nice thing for Edith and me—he has just taken it into his obstinate old head to put me forward for Vice-President of the Corporation—Vice-President, Barton! All going well I shall be elected to-morrow—and here you are to-day!"

Barton had begun to pace the floor. He now stopped and peered at Mr. Tibbetts with a hard smile on his lips. "What do you wish me to do?" he demanded; "com-

mit suicide? It annoys me to be inappropriate."

"Barton," returned Mr. Tibbetts, seated tentatively on the edge of a chair, and bending forward with his hands on his knees, "Did you ever hear of Enoch Arden?"

"Yes," admitted Barton, "and I always thought" —

"You always thought he was an old fool, I suppose, because he turned away and left her with the other man. You are younger, Barton — I am not jesting, Barton, I" —

"Mr. Tibbetts, I am not built that way. Moreover, Edith is not married to the other man. There is no parallel or other justification for your pleasantry."

"I insist, Barton, that I am not jesting."

“And I insist, Mr. Tibbetts, that you shall not torture me. Where is Edith? I shall see her! Nothing that has happened denies me that privilege.”

Mr. Tibbetts placed a restraining hand on the soldier's arm. “No, Barton. She is not in the house. Be patient! Do you want to spoil everything? Do you want to make us all unhappy? Do you find anything so unpardonably grotesque in what I have said? I am not blaming you for being alive.”

“Thanks,” said Barton.

Mr. Tibbetts ignored the irony. “You are here and must be reckoned with.”

“Now you are talking,” said Barton.

“You being alive, there is always

the chance that Edith may throw over Hadleigh."

"That seems reasonable," suggested the soldier.

"The chance, I say. But you need not imperil that chance. Will you make the most of it by rushing matters? Take a large view of the case—an impersonal view, Barton, and you will see that I am not unreasonable. What am I asking but a proper pause, a proper caution? To-day you are a calamity. To-morrow—after twelve o'clock noon—you would be only"—

"Only an occurrence," offered Barton.

"Save your sarcasm, Barton. There is nothing selfish in what I am asking of you. Ah, my dear boy! it would be a different matter to-morrow—

after twelve noon! Heavens! there's Edith!"

They both had started. Mr. Tibbetts placed his hands fervently on Barton's shoulders. "Barton! — for my sake, for her sake, for your own sake, do not show yourself yet — hide yourself somewhere here — for this time. Barton! — to-morrow" —

It came to Barton afterward that his grotesque scramble for concealment behind the corner of the screen near the table — a scramble in which he was feverishly assisted by Mr. Tibbetts — cost him more than the most trying moment of his campaign. It was only afterward that a sense of its absurd theatricalism came to him, for in that moment everything else faded in the sound of her voice.

“Why, uncle ! are you still upset over Amanda Maud? What a poor philosopher you are, after all.”

“Yes, Edith,” faltered Mr. Tibbetts, in a supreme effort to soften the outward lines of his perturbation. “I am a very poor philosopher. Now, with you, Edith, it is very different. You are a real philosopher. You don’t let things needlessly worry you. It — it is a great gift,” he pursued, watching Edith as she crossed the room in the direction of the table, — “a great gift, Edith !” His hand reached as if to restrain her. “Don’t sit on the table !”

She had, indeed, followed a girlish habit, and with one foot on the floor was swinging the other from over the corner of the table in close proximity to the hidden visitor.

“Why, what is the matter, uncle?”

She herself was in no tranquillity at that moment. Hadleigh was late.

“But it is so extraordinary,” exclaimed her uncle, “for a girl of your age to sit on the table. Perhaps I am getting nervous, or I should ignore such exhibitions of impropriety. However — *please* get off the table!” This was at the unwonted spectacle of Barton kissing the hem of her gown, his face as white as the hem.

“What risks some people take,” remarked Mr. Tibbetts equivocally, as Edith crossed to the window. “Can’t you see that the table might upset or break under you? The act was not only inelegant, my dear, but dangerous.”

“Uncle, you must take a nerve tonic. You are getting more excitable every day.”

“Then you, Edith, must consider the condition of my nerves. It is for you not to offend them. But don’t worry over me,” Mr. Tibbetts went on, a furtive eye on the not sufficiently invisible soldier. “Just go and do something to occupy yourself—to amuse yourself, my dear.”

“The simple truth is,” said Edith, advancing upon Uncle Amos with a look of perplexed investigation, “that I never saw you act so queerly.”

“There!” protested Mr. Tibbetts, his voice rising, “you are going to sit on that table again! I can feel it in my bones. What makes *you* so restless that you have to go about the house sitting on tables in this manner?”

Mr. Tibbetts pre-empted the corner of the table. "If you think that the decorative proprieties require that some one should sit on the table I might sacrifice myself," and Mr. Tibbetts essayed to lift one of his plump legs over the table edge. For reasons directly associated with the shortness of his stature the effort was ludicrously unsuccessful.

"Fool!" thought Barton. "This man is fit for a farce."

"You are making a great sacrifice, uncle," said Edith, with a shadowy smile and a glance at her watch. "I will promise not to sit on the table any more."

"Thank you, my dear." Mr. Tibbetts looked uneasily after the girl as she moved away, and in a moment of irresolution following her departure



*“‘I will promise not to sit on  
the table any more.’”*



he grunted to Barton, "Stay where you are!"

"What did you say, uncle?" came Edith's voice from the hall and her restless figure returned to the doorway.

"O! — I — I only remarked, Edith, that there is no reason why you should go away angry. I am a little upset — by business matters, you know; and then that Amanda Maud" —

It might have been thought that the name summoned the irrepressible Amanda, for at that moment she portentously appeared — a miracle which freshly astounded Mr. Tibbetts, who had supposed she was out of the house. What special providence had carried Barton to the side door and into the library without her knowledge?

“You said I might go out this afternoon, Miss Edith.”

“Yes,” interjected Mr. Tibbetts, upon whom the effect of complicating circumstances bore more heavily every moment; “please let her go, Edith. She needs more of the open air. She is too much confined to the house. I have observed this lately. It is unwise. If ever you wish to go out, Amanda, ask me!”

“Uncle!” was all that Edith ventured to say in reproof of this extraordinary interference in her domestic authority. Her saying nothing more was, perhaps, the worst of rebukes.

Amanda bestowed upon Mr. Tibbetts one of her inexplicable looks of inquiry. Her habits of classification were necessarily rudimentary, and she never had succeeded in fixing Mr.

Tibbetts's place in the order of creation. At this hour he seemed to her to be particularly queer and unaccountable, though her mystification was scarcely so deep as Edith's.

The acute stage of Mr. Tibbetts's perturbation appeared in the gasp of relief with which he greeted what appeared to be the safe departure of the two women — Edith to her room, Amanda to the outer world.

“Ah! Barton! you can see what a terrible affair this is to me! Thank heaven we are rid of Amanda Maud. But Edith — she will not go out, and we must be careful. She is expecting some one — she is expecting Hadleigh.”

Barton arose from the cramped position in which he had endured more than physical distress. “Then

I will see her now!" he said, with ominous finality.

Mr. Tibbetts clutched him desperately. "Hush!" he pleaded. "Barton!—you would n't spoil everything in your rash, impetuous way? Listen. Can you expect to help matters by reckless behavior? Remember that she has accepted him — yes, I know; it was under a misapprehension, but — hush! come with me a moment!" and Mr. Tibbetts half dragged Barton out through the passage into the extension room.

"Now, be calm for a moment, Barton!"

"Be calm yourself!" retorted Barton, wrestling with his growing impatience.

"I'm calm enough, Barton," expostulated Mr. Tibbetts, his eyebrows



*“ ‘Now, be calm for a moment, Barton.’ ”*



twitching. "It's you. You won't listen. You don't see that this thing has to be approached with delicacy — delicacy, my friend! Of course seeing Edith seems like a very imperative necessity with you. But what has happened, has happened. You want to brush all that away. 'I am here,' you say, 'and that changes everything.' But does it change everything? Does it make it less dangerous for you to rush into her presence? Would not that shock be terrible in the first place?"

"Then go and break it to her as you think best," Barton demanded. He swung about again. "No, we shall do better."

"Better?" echoed Mr. Tibbetts.

"What you say may be true, Mr. Tibbetts. If she has become attached

to another there is occasion for some hesitation. I have a lover's confidence."

Mr. Tibbetts nodded.

"Yet I think I know her better than any one else. Even if — if she loved Hadleigh, I still should go to her. I still should think I had the right to go, understand. But I am willing to try her. When you ask me to wait until to-morrow you ask too much" —

"Barton!"

"You ask too much. This night would kill me if I had not seen her." Barton took a turn across the room. "Yes, it would kill me. But if she really loves him I — I shall go."

"What shall you do, Barton?" Mr. Tibbetts peered inquiringly at the restless figure in khaki as it

moved away from him and returned again. The soldier stopped in front of him and placed a strong hand on his shoulder.

“This shall be the way,” said Barton, with an impetuous slowness. “Go and tell her that Hadleigh is here.”

“Hadleigh?” Mr. Tibbetts half turned his head. “What do you mean?”

“I ask you to go and tell her that Hadleigh is here. I soon shall see whether she loves him. I could not be deceived.”

“Barton, that is absurd. This is no jest. You may think it fantastic that I should ask you to conceal your return until to-morrow. But wise reasons affecting us all — you as well — are behind that re-

quest. Now you propose some ridiculous trick. Tell her Hadleigh is here? I should feel forced to go and tell her that you are here and be done with it."

"As you like," said Barton, turning away with a gesture that was undebatable, "so that you do me the justice to say it quickly."

Mr. Tibbetts left the room in profound confusion. Clearly, argument with Barton was at an end. The soldier was hopelessly obstinate in his determination to see Edith. There was nothing more to be done. If he chose to bring disaster, there was no help. All the same it was excessively annoying. The vice-presidency of the Fordwell Company was as good as gone already. Mr. Tibbetts rebelled against this ill stroke of for-

tune. His rebellion deepened his confusion as he climbed the stair toward Edith's room.

Then he paused as he heard the rustle of her gown. "Edith," he blurted, "he is here."

Whether the equivocal character of this message appeared to him as he descended the stair again is much to be doubted. Certainly no thought of Hadleigh was with him at the moment of his announcement. That it all was over — that was his one emotion.

He went back to Barton with his face lowered, his hands fidgeting behind him. His manner misled the younger man.

"What have you said to her?" Barton inquired perplexedly.

Mr. Tibbetts was resentfully mute.

“You are deceiving me for some reason,” Barton declared. “You are against me. What have you said? I soon shall know!”

“Wait, Barton!” cried the other, called to his senses by the threatened shock to the girl, — “one moment!”

But Barton hurried out of the room, Mr. Tibbetts clinging to his coat.

To Edith her uncle’s singular announcement from the stair was less astonishing than it might have been had not his recent excitement prepared her for new vagaries, and had she herself been freer from an agitation which she sought unsuccessfully to conceal from herself.

When she entered the sitting-room her step was tremulously decided. She saw in a quick glance that Had-

leigh was not there. Neither was he in the library, a circumstance which an observer might have associated with an immediate loss of some of the outward calm with which she had descended the stair.

The truth is that her heart was beating high. She had set herself to do an exceedingly disagreeable thing, and she had undertaken to spare herself no penitential detail of a task imposed by her sense of justice to Hadleigh and to herself. It was costing her the last drops of her courage to confess to him that she had promised too much, that to offer him more than her high respect had been to offer him more than she owned.

Why had he not greeted her there where she had expected to see him? A little matter may stagger one's

overwrought nerves. One is unwilling to search for a lover one is about to dismiss.

She sat down at the library table. How should she meet him? She had fancied his inquiring look, and had planned her humiliating story. It was turning out differently, somehow. She hated the thought of looking him in the eyes.

At the sound of a step she felt herself grow cold.

“Don’t speak!” she commanded tremulously, her face averted. “I — I have n’t any courage, after all, and you must do me the last kindness of listening for a moment or I shan’t be able to say a word. There is something I must say. It is a hard thing to say — the hardest thing I ever tried to say. You will understand that.”



*“‘Don’t speak!’ she com-  
manded tremulously.”*



Barton was frozen where he stood, and old Tibbetts, a detaining hand on Barton's arm, his lips parted, utterly failed in the first dazed moment to grasp the significance of Edith's speech.

"You always have known," the girl went on, "that I held a high ideal of a woman's duty — that I believed in the true love of the woman for the man as well as in the true love of the man for the woman. Without this, marriage could not be holy. There are so many ways of looking at a woman's duty, that I suppose God forgives her for some mistakes. When I promised to marry you I did not foresee everything that has happened — happened to myself. This will seem very cruel to you."

Mr. Tibbetts put out his hand toward Edith, his eyes on Barton, who stood white and strung at the parted curtains. Perhaps the disaster fascinated him. At all events he did not speak.

“Try not to think harshly of me,” came Edith’s voice. “Try to remember all the good you can of me. But this is the truth, whatever may have seemed to be true to either of us. I do not love you. I must not see you as my lover any more. I have done you a great wrong.”

Barton drew back as if some one were stabbing him repeatedly. Tibbetts had a confused sense of his going, and of Edith still speaking. “I was foolish to think that love ever could come to me again. The only man I ever loved, the only man I ever could

love, lies buried at Manila. . . .  
Forgive me, Marcus" — she had  
arisen — "I have n't asked you to be  
seated, I have n't — uncle!"

Only Tibbetts stood there, wringing his hands.

"Uncle! and you let me" —

"My — my dear, he just went  
away."

"Away!" She sank again into  
the chair.

"Yes, Edith. He has gone. I —  
I am afraid, my dear, that you will  
have to tell him again!"

## PART THREE



HE trolley into the city ran scarcely a hundred yards from the house, but Barton struck blindly across the valley with little thought as to the direction in which his steps carried him. How he left the Lynwood house would at any later time have been a matter as trying to his recollection as an elusive hiatus in a dream.

Fate is credited with a whimsical habit in managing children and

drunken men. Doubtless there is a special formula for lovers who blunder, otherwise drama might perish and ordinary fiction go lame in an early chapter.

However, the great fact just here is that Barton and Edith managed to be deceived in defiance of every reasonable probability that such a thing would not happen. It was a chance in a million, and even that millionth chance demanded Tibbetts. The thing could not have been done without him — and it could not have been done had he meant to do it.

The blinding bitterness that seized upon the soldier bore with it a distorted image of Tibbetts, whom Barton's grief and anger instinctively associated with the blow that so unexpectedly struck him down.

And yet, thought Barton, what difference did it make what had been said to her? She had judged and executed him. There was no saving gleam of false impulse in what she had said. She had spoken with emotion — she had thought him dead. But all the same she spoke with merciless decision. The words were colored by the moment. She had lived with the thoughts they expressed.

This was his home coming. This was the end of the journey. This was the crown to his devotion.

A man has his notions of human nature, of right and wrong. He has his theories of friendship, of love, of fidelity, his ideals that flame steadily in the darkest night. Perhaps he has had the hope of proving

in his own life that cynicism is a lie, that faith is a living flower, fair, elate, imperishable. What a mockery was all this in the face of such a grotesque tragedy !

It was hard enough to think that in a few short months she should have been able to find a satisfying love in another. It was crushing to think that, having so found her way, no surviving thought of him should have better guided her greeting. The wound from an enemy is at worst an awkward thing. The blow of a friend is the real hurt, the supreme calamity of life.

Poor Barton felt that this wound had rended his soul. He had no blame for Hadleigh — no, no. He assured himself that Hadleigh was the one man he would have

chosen to take his place by her side. And she, perhaps, had been influenced by thought of himself in listening to his friend. It was not a fantastic idea — or might not have seemed such had the last hour been turned differently.

The world was empty — that was the short of it. Had he been a coward, Barton might have found consolation in some desperate resolve to outwit the fate that had preserved him alive. As it was, he could have cursed the fortune that denied him a forward place in a charging line. There are lucky men who at the right moment have the chance to lead a forlorn hope.

Why was his path so smooth? Why did the field lie soft and odorous before him? Why did the sun



*“When he had sketched her in the  
green vista of the valley.”*



mock him with its September shimmer? Why did the trees —

The trees! Here was the tree beneath which she sat when he had sketched her in the green vista of the valley. . . . He had given the sketch to her. That was long ago, in the other time. . . . What had she done with such souvenirs of their betrothal? Was she so different from anything he had fancied that she could look upon that image of herself drawn in his affectionate lines without a twinge of regret for the cruelty of her dismissal?

Such things, he thought, had turned honest men into something worse than cynics. No man could be the same again who had gone through a trial like this. The burn of such a moment must dis-

figure him, must cripple his reason, must kill his faith.

“Holy saints!”

The voice seemed to come out of the earth, but when Barton looked up he discovered its owner in the person of a hatless youth who evidently had been running hard, for his face was flushed and he was panting heavily. At the moment when Barton caught sight of him the lad was staring at him with something like terror in his look.

“Becker,” said Barton quietly; “you are Becker, are n’t you.”

“Y-yes,” stammered the youth, still moving. “I thought you were — were” —

“Barton? I am.”

Becker shifted uneasily as if to break into a run again, glancing over

his shoulder, then once more at the soldier. "I — thought you were — were dead."

"I was," said Barton quietly. "But I came back."

"God!" Becker tore away through a fringe of bushes, never turning his head.

What did this mean? Barton looked after him for a moment, then walked on. Certainly the world was strangely muddled. The valley seemed much the same. Here was the river, rippling in the sunlight, the same old lazy river. There were the works and the row of white houses beyond. Further away was the old white steeple and the water tower. But the people — they were as changed as if he had been away for the length of a Rip Van Winkle

sleep, or as if some malign spirit had cast a blight upon them. Witness young Becker, if not stark crazy, acting like a madman or a hunted spirit.

What was this on the ground! Barton wondered if his mind were going, or if he actually saw lying among the first-fallen leaves the figure of a man.

He did not hurry to the spot. Probably the thing was another trick of his tortured brain. . . .

It was a man, a young man with a red stain on his coat, an unconscious man bleeding from some wound near his shoulder. He knew the man. . . . Yes, it was Marcus Hadleigh — Hadleigh, dying perhaps.

Barton said the name aloud, not as



*"Yes, it was Marcus  
Hadleigh."*



if to call him, but as one might label another phase of a bad dream.

At this the young man beside whom Barton was kneeling opened his eyes. For a moment the eyes seemed to see nothing. Then they steadied themselves in a searching look at Barton's face, and the brows gathered perplexedly.

"My God!" cried Hadleigh, clearing his throat. "You're not Barton?"

"Yes I am, Hadleigh. Lie still for a moment till I find what the trouble is." Barton was awake again.

"I'm shot," said Hadleigh, with his eyes hard fixed on Barton. "He hit me right—right here—in the arm. It's nothing at all, but I was chasing him, and—and a weakness came over me."

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

“Shut up, Hadleigh, until I get a compress here . . . there, that’s better.”

Hadleigh began to tremble violently. “No . . . you can’t be Barton. I’m as crazy as a . . . No, Barton’s dead, poor fellow. And yet — God! the hat, and the coat!” —

“Hadleigh, *will* you shut up? If you have n’t bled too much perhaps you can get your arm up — here — like — that’s it, that’s it. We ought to know the trick. Mrs. Henderling’s house is only a little way off. I’d rather not leave you; you must try to walk.”

“Of course I’ll walk,” faltered Hadleigh, his eyes still fascinated by the face of Barton. “I’m only a little weak, you understand.”

“Don’t talk, I tell you. Put your steam into those legs of yours. That’s right. We shall only be a minute or two. Keep still and listen to me. I’ll talk. I was hard hit that day, Hadleigh, but it wasn’t what you thought. I pulled out, and afterward escaped. There was a mix-up at the hospital, and I was a long time in the fever. Probably it wasn’t a hundred years. But I got through. It was that fellow Binton, poor devil, from Sandville, who was buried with the two others. It was like something out of a book, an almighty exciting, impossible romance. Anyway, I’m here. You see how this lunatic world goes. After all your trouble, Hadleigh, you had to come home to get shot — There! eyes front! We’re getting there!”

They made him comfortable in the little room off Mrs. Henderling's porch — he refused to lie down. When the doctor came he said it was a close shave for the bone. Having adjusted a new compress and bound up the wound the doctor turned to Barton. "Well done. You're an artist."

"He's a soldier," said Hadleigh.

"He did a quick turn for me once," returned Barton, looking down at the wounded man.

The doctor, who had run over on foot, said he would 'phone over to the Hadleigh place and have a carriage up right away. They had discouraged Hadleigh's attempt to tell how it happened, but he managed to explain that he was shot while driving, and that he saw his assailant.

“One or two rough ones at the works have had it in for me,” he said, “and a young fellow, a mere kid, who was discharged a week ago, is the one who did it. I expected to be attacked, but I didn’t expect a bullet. I was driving across to the Lynwood house.” Hadleigh looked over at Barton. “The fellow fired from behind some bushes by the road. If you get sight of my horse, doctor, you might send the rig up.”

“But you must go straight home,” warned the doctor.

Hadleigh nodded.

“Yes,” he continued, when the doctor went away, “I left the horse and headed for him. I know the man.”

“So do I,” added Barton. “It was young Becker.”

“How the devil” —

“I met him running.”

“It is a funny world!” cried Hadleigh. “What an extraordinary thing that you should stumble over me!”

“I almost did stumble over you.”

“Do you know,” pursued Hadleigh, twisting in the arm-chair, “I can’t believe it is you — back from the dead. I tell you, when I opened my eyes and saw you, it came over me queerly like a dream that I was dead and that I had joined you, Barton. It didn’t even seem astonishing. I took it quite for granted in a way. Then when my senses came” —

“You are talking too much, Hadleigh. You are not badly hurt, but you bled a good deal and you must be quiet for a while. I shall

have to leave you if you can't keep mum."

"I'll be good if *you* don't keep quiet, Barton, and will go on and tell me everything. What are you doing with your gun?"

Barton was leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, his hands engaged with the revolver he had carried home in virtue of that tribute to sentiment by which a man is permitted to buy his weapons from the government. He had carried the revolver within his blouse for the boyish pleasure of parading it a little in his home coming.

"You are right," said Barton, studying the Remington, "this is a funny world. For instance, here I was in the field. There you were driving past. Now, what was to

prevent me from having a go at you myself? Think how romantic it would be if I were under suspicion," and he threw open the revolver as if he were breaking its back.

"Yes," admitted Hadleigh, mystified by the soldier's strange laugh. "But I saw the fellow who did it. That spoils the romance. Just as he stood up I caught a fair sight of him. It was Teddy Becker. We must get the police after him. Not that I care for the row. But he's a dangerous character. It's a duty. Will you do something for me, Barton?"

"What is it?"

"I want to send word over to the Lynwoods."

"I'll send it."

Hadleigh gave him a furtive look. "Have you — been there?"



“ ‘What are you doing  
with your gun?’ ”



“Yes,” Barton answered shortly.

Hadleigh studied his face. He could not read it. Barton went on as if to prevent Hadleigh from pursuing this line of inquiry: “Shall you dictate it, Hadleigh?”

“No, no; write anything you like and sign it yourself—just to tell her that I have been hurt. Do you know,” continued Hadleigh, “I was just thinking how odd it would be if you *hadn’t* been there and she should get such a note signed by you!”

“It would have been odd,” admitted Barton.

He had looked about and half risen as if to go in search of a scrap of paper. He brought out a packet from his pocket and looked it over for a blank page. He found a sheet

blank on one side. He turned it over and read: "Ever your faithful sweetheart, Edith." The words cut him, and his temples began throbbing again. "Ever your faithful sweetheart." Here was concentrated, sublimated irony. He would not have thought that he could be guilty of writing as he did on the back of this sheet the few lines in which he said the things he was asked to say.

They were very curt lines, he had to admit, when he came to glance them over. But this was no time for fine writing. It was news of Hadleigh that was the essential thing. She would n't distress herself over the medium nor over the manner of the communication. He folded the sheet and placed it in an envelope which Mrs. Henderling fetched for him

when she saw him writing. They sent it away by Mrs. Henderling's boy.

"Barton," said Hadleigh, when he saw the other rise, "I want to see more of you right away. You've got lots of things to tell me . . . and I've got some things to say to you. Just now I — I don't somehow" —

"Well," returned Barton in a dull way, with a fling of his shoulders as if to give to his words a lightness he could not get into his voice, "keep quiet to-day anyway. Here's the carriage — it's your own rig."

Barton helped him out to the gate, and then with a laugh lifted him to the seat.

"You must be getting into condition again, Barton," suggested Had-

leigh, who appeared to hate a pause in the talk.

“O yes,” agreed Barton, taking the reins from the man, “I am in the pink of condition.”

Hadleigh’s mother and sister met them near the house. The doctor had added the news about Barton to his ’phone message, and the two women were in great excitement.

“It’s all right!” shouted Hadleigh. Nevertheless his voice broke.

“You poor boy!” exclaimed the mother; “and Mr. Barton! I can’t believe it!”

“Both things are true,” said Barton. “He’s hurt and I’m here. I’m going to turn him over to you now.”

When they had the wounded man

in the house Barton slipped away unnoticed. He stalked down the railroad track, through the engine yard, ignoring the shriek of a warning whistle, and strode on, head down, past the factories and the long enclosure of the rink until he found himself back in town.



## Part Four



NOW, it will be understood that none of these later happenings was known to Amanda Maud Wiggins sitting in her trysting place in mute communion with an ugly and inexcusable Japanese dragon that ornamented a corner of Barton's studio.

Amanda had spoken truly. Barton's studio was quiet. It formed the north corner of the studio floor in the Board of Trade building, farthest from the noises of the street. If

Amanda always resented the five flights of steps, and seldom neglected to make a suitable comment thereon, the good qualities of the uninhabited studio could not be denied.

It was the only studio Amanda ever had seen, and she took Joe Gribsey's word for it that most of them were pretty much the same way. But the dust in the corners annoyed her unspeakably at times, and the inaccessible sabres, antlers, masks and lanterns smote her grievously.

"What this place needs," she had said to Joe Gribsey on several occasions, "is a good cleaning up."

"Not on your life," was Gribsey's invariable response.

"The fact is, Amanda," Joe had explained to her in mitigation of his

refusal, "that you can't clean up studios. That ain't the way they do it. You just dust off the things they sit on and touch with their hands. Once I dusted off one of Mr. Barton's casts — that bushy-headed jay under the angel — and he would n't speak to me for three days."

While Amanda sat staring at the Japanese dragon the door opened, and the girl, turning, saw a soldier standing under the Turkish blade that supported the curtain of the inner door.

For a moment Barton and Amanda looked at each other without speaking. Then Amanda found her voice.

"The artist ain't in," she said.

"That's where you're wrong," remarked Barton, peering about him. "That's where you're wrong."

“Well, upon my word!” was all Amanda could say for a time. Presently she added, firmly, under an accumulated resentment, “Who are you looking for?”

Barton glanced down at her, at her big black eyes, at her round chin and flushed cheeks, at her heavy unmanageable hair. “Joe Gribsey will do for a start-off,” he answered.

“He’s out just now,” declared Amanda, dismissal in her tone.

“Is he? Perhaps you know when he’ll be back. I could n’t find him anywhere in the building.”

“He’ll be back pretty soon.”

“Perhaps you even know where he’s gone.”

“I do. He’s gone for some ginger pop.”

“O! He has, has he? Well, now, I should n’t want to spoil anything. Don’t mind my smoking, do you?” Barton had crossed to the old desk, found one of his pipes, and put aside the newer one which he pulled out of his coat with the Manila tobacco.

“Upon my word!” repeated Amanda, her eyes opening wider. “If you don’t beat all! You just make yourself to home, don’t you?”

“I’m going to try to,” admitted Barton.

“Did n’t you hear me say that the artist ain’t in? What’s more, he never will be in.”

“Is that so?” Barton sat down opposite Amanda. “How odd. What is he doing with himself?”

“He’s dead.”

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

“Poor fellow.” Barton pulled slowly at the pipe. “Too bad. By the way,” he pursued, “would you mind telling me who is occupying this studio just now? — the artist, the other artist, being dead, you know.”

“There ain’t nobody occupying it,” retorted Amanda. “I’m just visitin’ here myself, visitin’ Joe — Mr. Gribsey.”

“I see,” nodded Barton. “Nice place, too.” Presently he added: “To tell you the truth, you have made me feel a little awkward here. You have n’t meant to, I know.” He eyed her with a savage whimsicality that might have puzzled a profounder observer than Amanda. “But I feel that I have intruded somewhat. I fancy that I ought to apologize to you.”

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

Amanda was framing some response when Joe Gribsey's shuffle sounded at the door, and an instant later the janitor appeared, two ginger-pop bottles in one hand, a yellow package in the other.

A soldier sitting in converse with Amanda in their trysting place, a soldier smoking a pipe, and —

“O Lord!” gasped Gribsey, dropping the ginger pop and package. The sight of this man looking so much as the real Barton had when he went away filled Gribsey with a horror that was grotesquely expressed in a countenance of singular mobility.

In a revulsion of feeling Barton found this affair of the studio grimly funny, as indeed it was. The abject horror in Gribsey's shaven visage almost made him laugh aloud, yet he

hastened to repair the damage he was inflicting upon Gribsey's nervous system.

"It's all right, Joe," he said, "I'm the real thing."

"O Lord!" repeated Gribsey.

"Joe Gribsey!" cried Amanda, "why don't you behave yourself? Have you gone looney?"

"Barton!" stammered Gribsey. "Don't yer see?—it's Barton that was killed! Lord! I never knew they looked so plain!"

"Have some sense, Joe," ordered Amanda, "he ain't no ghost."

"Of course not," declared Barton encouragingly, with a hand outstretched; "not a bit of it. Don't you know a live man when you see him, Joe? I'm just Barton, alive again, not killed, you

know, and come back to bother you again."

"*Mr. Barton!* — is it — really — you! Well, I'll be" —

"It's really me, Joe, and you've spilled the ginger pop, and we are gorgeously thirsty. Go right out and get some more. Get several things, Joe; you know what I like. I can't eat anything just now, I'm afraid, but" —

Joe could not be induced to go until he had shaken Barton's hand many times, and all but hugged him in the excess of his joy and astonishment. When at last he was shuffling excitedly down the stairs again they could hear him muttering, "Well, I'll be everlastin'ly jiggered!"

As for Amanda, she had fastened a new look upon Barton. "And so,"



“‘It’s all right, Joe, I’m  
the real thing.’”



she said, "you are the artist who went to the war?"

"Yes," replied Barton, "and, worse luck, I am the artist who came home again."

Amanda took the liberty of drawing her chair a little closer. "I know somethin' about you," she said.

"Do you?" asked Barton.

Amanda nodded. "I'm glad to see you back again, and I know some one that'll be gladder than I am — gladder than any one else, I suppose."

Barton expressed his interest.

"She's the young lady in our house. She's Miss Lynwood."

"Yes, yes," said Barton casually, "your voice did sound familiar."

"Why, I never saw you before," declared Amanda.

“No,” admitted Barton, recalling his cramped situation behind the screen, “I don’t believe you did. Eh—how long have you been at the Lynwood house?”

“Since January. You went away long before that did n’t you?”

“Long before that,” repeated Barton slowly. “And when you go away and stay a long time—a number of months,” he added savagely, until Amanda stared, “you can’t tell how things will be when you get back, can you?”

“Maybe,” said Amanda, expanding in an emotion of confidential exchange. “Now when I don’t see Joe Gribsey for quite a while I get so ’s I can’t wait to see him. Then when I do see him he makes me awful tired.”

“That is too bad,” returned Barton.

Amanda watched him interestedly as he paced the studio. She saw his face change as he walked. When he finally turned sharply and asked, “Will you do me a favor?” she was almost startled out of her placidity by the look in his eyes.

“I’d just like to,” she answered, and quite truly.

“There is something,” he said, “that I should like to have you carry back to Miss Lynwood. You would n’t lose it, would you?”

“No, indeed, sir!”

He turned to his desk and began to write. Presently Amanda saw him take off something from about his neck, and though he pretended to keep on writing she was sure that he stared at the thing, whatever it was,

long and fixedly. She wondered what object could hold his earnest attention so long.

Presently he got up. "Please take this back with you," he said, giving her an envelope in which there was something hard, like a locket maybe, and a silver piece lay in her hand underneath.

"Any message with it?" asked Amanda.

"The message is there," replied Barton.

Amanda held the envelope in both of her hands for a moment, then passed it debatingly from one to the other, and ended by putting it in her hat which lay near the pillows on the Venetian chest. She thought that Barton was watching to make certain of the envelope's safe bestowal; but

his fixed glance saw nothing, and he did not stir from where he stood in the middle of the floor until Gribsey came gasping back with several bottles, some fruit, and a package of cakes.

“ Say ! ” burst out Joe, “ nobody ’ll believe it ! I just told Dunkley, and he said I was gettin’ worse ! Pete Somers says some green goods man is workin’ us to swipe the studio stuff. What a racket ! Gee — willikins ! what ’ll Miss Mitser and old Morgan say ! And Jennings ” —

“ Are you goin’ to hold them bottles all day ? ” asked Amanda.

“ Give me time, Amanda, give me time. I tell you, I ’m pretty much disturbed myself ! Just to think ! — Mr. Barton, this is the most wonderful thing that ever happened ! Here

you were dead as a herrin' to the whole of us — dead and buried, dead and writ up in the papers — and a mighty mean yeller dog picture they had of you, too — and then, here you walks in as alive as a new policeman."

"If I don't get a drink in another minute," complained Barton, "you 'll have to bury me again."

But Joe only laughed excitedly as he pulled out the little table and disposed the fare, Amanda helping. "This is just rich!" he went on. "My sister 'll say I been drinkin'. I 'll have a tremenjous grind on some folks. O, I 'll work something good on Stovey all right! 'Bet you,' I 'll say, 'that Mr. Barton was n't killed at all.' 'Go on!' he 'll say; 'was n't he buried?' 'Maybe you won't bet,' I 'll say.

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

‘Go on!’ he’ll say; ‘somebody’s havin’ fun with you.’ ‘All right,’ I’ll say, ‘you don’t have to take me up. There are others.’ ‘See here,’ Stovey’ll say, ‘do you mean it? Do you want to throw away some dough?’ ‘I’m your man,’ I’ll say. And then” —

“Joe,” interrupted Amanda, “have some sense.”

“Take this bottle, Mr. Barton,” Joe said, pushing the bulk of the supplies toward the soldier. “I’ll give you and Amanda the glasses. I’ll take the cup. You see, me and Amanda” —

“That was all right, Joe,” Barton interposed. “You were quite welcome.”

“That’s what I told Amanda,” pursued Joe. “I said you’d never

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

care — I mean even if you was alive.”

“ And being dead ” —

“ Ho, ho ! — Yes ! You bein’ dead — what did *you* care ! ” Joe giggled delightedly. “ And us never supposin’ for a moment ” —

“ I thought it was very foolish,” commented Amanda.

Barton turned questioningly.

“ I mean coming up here,” explained the girl. “ But, you see, Joe could n’t get out only about one night in the month ” —

“ And that was n’t enough, I should think,” was Barton’s reassurance.

“ Well, he did n’t think so,” said Amanda.

“ Nor you either, Amanda,” expostulated the janitor. “ You said yourself ” —

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

“Now, Joe, you know I never said a word about coming up here.”

“O no! not about coming up here. Of course not. Have some of the grapes, Mr. Barton. You did n’t say nothin’ about comin’ up here. That was my brilliant idea. Ha, ha! I worked that one myself. But if you was to come and see me” —

“That was very good of her, Joe,” suggested Barton.

“That’s true, Mr. Barton, and I always tell her” —

“But I said to you, Joe, more than once,” declared Amanda, defensively, “that it was n’t exactly right to be comin’ here to a place that was n’t mine, nor yours either, even if the artist was dead.”

“I forgive you,” said Barton. “I can’t see what you will do now. I’ll be in the way.”

Amanda laughed and Joe twisted his restless face.

“Never mind!” cried Joe explosively, “love will find a way!”

“The idea!” ejaculated Amanda sternly.

“Perhaps I’ll be leaving again,” Barton remarked slowly.

Joe’s hands dropped. “Mr. Barton!”

“I should think,” said Amanda, her eyes wide, “that you would want to stay — where you are, for a little while.”

“You don’t mean to go back to them battles?” asked Joe, with a perplexed stare at Barton.

“No, not that. I might go to

New York, for instance.” Then Barton smiled, it may be at a grim thought of his confidence and his audience. “But don’t worry over that yet,” he added, catching up his pipe. “Did I understand,” he asked, turning to Amanda, “that you don’t mind my smoking?”

“She won’t let me,” remarked Joe.

“Joe Gribsey! I never stopped you.”

Barton watched them through the smoke. “You see, Joe,” he said, “she feels more responsible for you.”

“I tell you, Mr. Barton,” and Joe put aside his glass, “I often thought of you ridin’ up in the front and slashin’ right into them, and I wished I was there with you” —

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

“The idea!” exclaimed Amanda, with a derisive inflection.

“I did wish I was there,” insisted Gribsey; “right beside you, and lettin’ them have it. I often thought” —

“For heaven’s sake, Joe,” protested Amanda, catching Gribsey by the sleeve, “don’t make a fool of yourself!”

Joe turned resentfully. “Amanda, you ain’t got no patriotism in you. I’d have gone to the war if it had n’t been for you. You would n’t let me go.”

“No, I would n’t. What good would you have been? You’d have got lost.”

“Joe,” suggested Barton, “you had better stay home with her.”

Joe twisted his face again. “I



“ ‘ Amanda, you ain’t got no  
patriotism in you.’ ”



guess you're right, Mr. Barton. I'd be mighty lonesome, I suppose."

"Yes," added Amanda, "and you'd be full of holes. You're so slow you'd never dodge anythin'."

At this they all laughed.

"Dodging is a very important part of it," said Barton.

But Joe looked incredulous. "When Mr. Hadleigh was in here — about a month ago, I think, the last time, — he told me all about how you was shot, — killed, he said, — and I judge there was n't no dodgin' about you, Mr. Barton. They all yelled to you, Mr. Hadleigh says, and you would n't stop, and that was how it happened. This is just what he said: 'That feller, Joe,' he says, 'was n't afraid of nothin' at all.'"

“Nonsense,” muttered Barton. “Why, Hadleigh was right along with me — he caught me when I tumbled off the horse.”

Then Barton arose suddenly in a way that made the two others understand that they must go, which they presently did, Joe carrying away the empty bottles.

They had scarcely gone when there was a tap at the door, and an old man came in. It was Morgan, the painter. He strode over to Barton with both hands outstretched.

“It is true, then !” he cried huskily, catching Barton by the shoulder. “I did n’t believe it. Welcome, my boy !”

“Glad to see you again, Mr. Morgan,” returned the younger man.

“I have played truant for a long time.”

“You have, lad, and we all thought you had gone for good. I thank God it was a mistake.” There were tears on old Morgan’s face. “It is the hell of war that it takes away our young men, spills our best blood, and leaves useless old chaps like me behind. Yes,” he answered to the younger man’s protesting look, “there is something infernally wrong about it. I remember, Barton, — no, I won’t sit down just now, — the day you stood in my door, wearing your soldier’s togs, to say good-bye. After you had gone I dropped my brushes and sat there brooding, my heart sick, that you should be given up and that I, a puttering old fossil” —

“Mr. Morgan,” interposed Barton, “you wrong yourself, and I’m afraid you wrong me by exaggerating the little service I was able to offer. Do you suppose any of us forget what you did in ’62?”

Morgan turned away and came slowly back. “You make me think of myself, Barton. But it was very different with me. I must tell you about it some other time. You will have your own affairs to-day. It is all very different.” He paused at the door and turned about. “Yes, I shall tell you all about it some day, if you can be bothered with the laments of a lonesome old man. It was very different with me. I did n’t want to come home. You see, Barton, I had a great disappointment before I went away.”

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

It was impossible that he should understand Barton's look.

"I had been crushed. I did n't go for love of my country. I went in hope of hurting some one who had hurt me. But I did n't succeed. She never cared."

Barton winced.

"Forgive me, my boy, for this impulsive whimper. But this thing has brought everything back upon me. I thought I was hard as iron, and the sight of you has softened me shamefully. I want your story as soon as you have time to tell it. Good-bye, for to-day. I praise the Almighty that you are safely back. You have everything to live for."

Barton grasped the old painter's hand in silence.



## Part Five



THIS was one of the ironies of life. Everything to live for!

For a long time after Morgan had gone Barton sat there stupidly, alone again with himself, alone in his old haunt, alone with all that reminded him of his earlier dreams — more alone than he had felt himself to be in the hospital cot where he had battled out the long fight with fever.

He caught up a portfolio and lifted his sketches and studies one by one without seeing any. It was no use. His mind would not work. His head had not been right since the fever. Something had broken.

He threw aside the portfolio, lighted his pipe again and tried to pull himself together. He must get at his letters and papers. There were people he must see. He must take his place in the world again. All this seemed like a mountain of weight upon him. He had no heart for any of it. Nothing seemed to be of any use.

Providence had mixed things up in an astonishing way. The beginning of everything that had gone wrong was the day of the skirmish. It was a swift game they were play-

ing with the enemy, a nimble and an ingenious enemy. It was all very well to call an enemy a savage, but a Mauser rifle is a wonderfully impersonal agency of communication, taking orders only from its master. That whine of the bullets — a funny thing! And when you are hit, that is a droll thing, too, a novel sensation, quite unlike anything else that ever happens to you.

Just before that Hadleigh had given him a quick look. Whether it expressed a suspicion that he had been hit, or some intuitive sense of an impending stroke, it said plainly enough (as it seemed afterward) “Good-bye!” When he did reel from the horse less than a minute later Hadleigh’s arm was there. Hadleigh had given a little growl when he caught him, and

had muttered some question that he did not quite catch. When he opened his eyes for a moment Hadleigh's face was bending over him, and he had the feeling that Farren, the surgeon, was near by tearing at the clothes of another man who had been hit. Then there were two faces, and one of them, which was Farren's, shook sadly, until, far gone as he was, he felt that he might as well go ahead and die.

The next faces were dusky, and he knew that he was a prisoner. He owed a big debt to that Tagalog lieutenant with the little hands and a shadow of a moustache who had done so much to make him comfortable. The month of waiting for the wound to heal was not so hard to bear as the two months of waiting for the chance

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

to escape. That week's agony before he got to the American camp was what brought on the fever. Indeed, when he staggered in on that wet Sunday morning he was too far gone to understand what they said about the troop.

How they figured it out that he was Binton of Sandville made little difference, after all. An earlier fugitive had carried word that Barton died early in his captivity ; so that, to be sure, he had to be Binton or some one else.

The fever was real. At the end of five weeks he was well enough to say that he was n't Binton. Then the nurse patted his head and told him to be quiet. After a while he asked them to send word in the despatches that he was alive—just as



*"Hadleigh's face was bending over him."*



Binton was dead. He took it for granted that they complied with his request, but discovered afterward, when he got to Manila, that they had not. A singular rage then came over him. He let them call him Binton in the discharge, and after writing a cable message he tore the thing up. "I will carry my own message," he said.

Nevertheless, when he got to San Francisco he went straight to the telegraph office. At that moment he learned that he might catch an immediate train, and he deferred his message for the time. The train worried and sickened him, and once or twice when his obligation to announce his coming appeared to him he found himself saying, feverishly, "I will carry my own message." It

was a poor joke. He saw this in retrospect. Although he did not know how sad a joke it had been, he let it measure for him the degree of his weakness.

The dusk was deepening and the studio shadows were falling with strange images. This symbolized for him the flavor of life, for the things he had taken for granted, had called the real things, the things that were worth while, were fading away, and only the fantasies, the mocking ghosts of things, seemed to be present and real.

He lighted the candle in the old tall candlestick, staring for a while into the flame, listening to the distant noises of the street, and wondering what he should do when the candle had burned out, — what



*"The train worried and  
sickened him."*



he should do with that hopeless night.

It was now that he did that which he had not the courage to do in the light of day — he lifted the curtain from before the unfinished portrait he had begun soon after they were engaged. He had thought it was going to be one of the best things he had done.

As long ago as when he had his year at Munich, they used to say of Barton's pictures of women, that all of them had the madonna look, just as they said of Melkin's women that they were all grisettes. At one time Barton used to think that he resented this comment as if it implied a limitation. All of his themes were not madonnas. He should be able to paint a bacchante if he wanted to.

One day when he had impulsively expressed something of this to Pellmann, the master, Pellmann after a moment's silence said: "My friend, every man, when he paints a woman, paints the female version of himself." At which Barton laughed, for Pellmann was not a flatterer.

This picture of Edith exhibited no flight of fancy. It certainly was a good likeness. She had a pair of the most perfect eyes he had ever seen. There was a girl who sat in the sketch class at the Art Student's League who had eyes something like them, but that girl's eyes had too much history in them. This was the marvellous thing about Edith's eyes, that, without the signs of history, they had such definite evidences of perception and feeling. Beyond the

form and color and movement was the *look*, the thing that made them American eyes, that paradox of wistful intelligence, of unawed inquiry, that piques and puzzles the foreign observer, and challenges the native to be his best.

Her nose was not quite so good. . . . No, it was not so perfect, though even its faults, he said to himself, were never commonplace. Her mouth belonged in the partnership with her eyes. The lips had that regularity, without coldness, that in some ways was harder to express on canvas than the elusive mystery, the feminine secret of her eyes.

What a mockery such a shadow of her now was! The painted lips were not sullied by the things she had said; but for this very reason the whole

face had become to him like that of one who was dead. The other Edith had gone out of his life. By a trick of fate this face was no longer his. Those lips. . . .

He got up again, and drew into the rays of the candle some of the canvases that had submissively faced the wall, like naughty children. Here was Dolly Cameron, who had worn a gypsy rig at the lawn party; who had read his hand and declared that he was going to live happily ever after. Clever girl, Dolly; but not a good prophetess certainly. That was a very bad guess of Dolly's. Live happily ever after!

Ah! here was old Nottway, the model, who used to complain so much of his rheumatism and the stairs — not peevishly, nor indirectly, but as

one man to another. Poor old Nottway! with his white hair and austere countenance, recalling the days when he had been a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, when he occupied an honored seat on the bench, when they even wanted to force upon him the nomination for lieutenant governor, — Nottway, with his courtly bow in the presence of a woman and his magnificent appetite for cheese and beer. Nottway was fit for any imposing part. He had been a bishop for Hilton, a monk for Snedeker, a Lear for De Faronne, a ruined banker for Chavin, an alchemist for Malloy. Yea, one man in his time plays many parts.

This leonine face of a woman was painted from Gribsey's mother, a talkative dame with a convulsive

chuckle, who furnished to Barton much real entertainment by her reminiscences of Joe's erratic boyhood. "When we had the farm," said Mrs. Gribsey, "before Samuel died, Joe used to deliver milk and vegetables in Hawsondale. Somehow he always had three or four dogs with him, and you could tell by the howl that went up in the village that Joe was on one of his deliverin' trips. Them dog fights got to be such a nuisance that we had to forbid Joe to own a dog, and we only allowed one dog at the farm, and made Joe chain this up before he started. But that didn't do any good. Dogs waited for him down by the schoolhouse. They broke their chains in the village to join his pack. We had lots of trouble over it."

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

This little pale blue fairy was Gladys. No easy thing to paint Gladys. It was like painting a butterfly on the wing. Young as the child was, she knew how to tease him. It was a fancy of his that he never should be able to keep her picture in the canvas, and that some day she would step out of it and come over to tease him with the flowers in her hand, like some tangible fairy in this world of shadows.

Dreams! all dreams! Good-bye, Gladys! Good-bye to all your fairy-land of sweet ideals! Good-bye to the days when life is too young for the deeper disappointments! Good-bye to the days that did not know fever and its legacies!

We take some things hard when they come to us for the first time, and

it may be, as Barton was thinking, that some things can come but once. Glory and grief have their grand crescendos. At this hour the air was full of the cries of salutation to the victorious admiral who also had come home across the sea. Yet the victorious admiral had not sailed homeward with a higher expectancy than Barton had felt in his journey over the Pacific and across the continent. When he had looked out over the prairie, jaded as he was by the journey, the sky had seemed to be written wide with hope. Perhaps he had been made a little cynical by his physical sufferings; but no shadow of real doubt or fear had crossed his homeward path, and as he drew near to his destination the unnatural petulance, the brooding silence that ap-

peared in his conduct in those last hours at Manila, and in his resolution to carry the message himself, seemed to be wholly melting away.

A thousand times during the journey he had recalled the day of the parade, the first parade of the troop after their betrothal, before there was any thought of a war and foreign service, when she had waved her handkerchief to him, an unmistakable radiance shining in her face.

And yet it is a man's imperative duty to shut out his troubles, to draw the veil of his resolution against the sight of his grief—to forget, if he can.

Forget! It was like trying to forget his fever, to forget that it still clung to him, sapping his nerve, dulling his senses.

As if to blot out his cares he drew the cloth over the face of Edith, and turning away flung himself upon the couch.

The couch was a bed of fire, and he arose again to pace the floor, to stop once more before the veiled frame. She was there, just the same. . . .

Far into the morning he fell, exhausted, into the chair near the frame, dropped his heavy head upon his arm, and yielded at last to the pitying caress of sleep.

Some dreams are never told. They are for the dreamer alone.

When a man has had a fever, and the night air bears an insidious chill, there are things the man should not do. Yet the gray dawn, tracing anew with its pale finger the night-



*"It was like trying to  
forget his fever."*



dimmed images of reality, found Barton still there, his head upon his arm, wrapped in the mystery of slumber.

The city about him waked and stirred, but he slept on. There was a sound on the stair and a knock at his door, but sleep still held his senses.

The noise did not arouse him, but who shall explain the potency of another life near our own, another heart beating high, other lips quivering in a strong emotion?

The door had been standing ajar, and a rustling figure crept in like the dawn itself. . . .

When Barton staggered to his feet he found himself staring at Edith, or what might have been Edith, perhaps; Edith, her white garden hat fallen to her shoulders, her raglan

suggesting somehow a hurried, impulsive departure from the house.

For a moment neither of them made a sound. That she should be other than some creature of his dreams was to Barton beyond belief. That she who had dismissed him yesterday with such unspeakable precision should now be standing there at the studio door in the early morning light was too much for his fevered head to grasp at once.

“Edwin!” she cried, starting forward under the restraint of the unreadable stare in his eyes. “Did you — did you write that cruel note about Marcus? Did you send this locket back to me?”

“Yes,” he said slowly, “I did.”

“It is no — no trick, then — they came from you?”

She made as if to go closer to him, her hands working. One of the hands held the locket.

“Yes,” he answered again, “they did.”

“I can’t believe” — she looked abjectly at him. “O Edwin! what did you mean? If I had disappointed you” —

“Disappointed me! My God!” Barton made a tortured gesture. “Disappointed me! Hear her!” He drew himself up, his fingers clutching a corner of the nearby desk. “Did you come here to tell me I was a fool to be disappointed? It is an extraordinary mark of consideration. A man is a great fool to be disappointed.”

“O Edwin! you are disappointing me.”

“Perhaps I am,” he returned, with a bitter inflection. “Perhaps I won’t do myself any credit as I am now. You see — some things that I have gone through with have unsteadied me a little, made it hard for me to take disappointment in a light, easy way. It is a pity. But it can’t make any difference to you. You are foolish to concern yourself over so small a matter.”

“So small a matter?”

She looked at him in despair, drawing back until she stood again by the door. And this was Barton — Barton, her lover, dwindling from his heroic lines because she, believing him dead, had listened to his friend. For this offence, these insults.

“So small a matter,” repeated Barton in a hard tone, his lip quivering.



*"But she had passed  
down the stair."*



And this was Edith Lynwood, the girl who had seemed to love him before all the world, yet who was not content to let him suffer undisturbed from the steady, unmitigated blow she had inflicted the day before.

“Pardon me!” he blurted, “I might have offered you a chair after this climb.”

She wished to speak again, but she was choking.

As for Barton, the room swam about him and there was a loud noise in his ears.

When she went out suddenly, without another word, he faltered as if to follow her, and stumbled like a wounded man. He got to his feet again and sprang to the door.

But she had passed down the stair.

## PART SIX



WHEN the fluttering figure of her young mistress came back through the garden, not pausing anywhere, and passed to the second-floor room without a sound, Amanda Maud saw and wondered. Plainly there was some mysterious significance in this early morning absence, in this silent, almost stealthy return.

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

Amanda worked with a slightly accelerated rapidity, singing softly her favorite unfinished song about the "wild moor," with more than the usual effect of being detached from the key. The truth is that Amanda's variations from true tone had that invariableness in which the listener often finds a new and original harmony, a peculiar and fascinating consistency, that gives to the major a fine minor flavor which even an exacting taste might hesitate to lose.

A little later in the morning Amanda appeared in her habitual house-dress, of which the skirt was a shade too short to be conventional. Hadleigh once had remarked that Amanda looked like a light-opera housemaid. Wherever she acquired the inspiration, Amanda clung with

a certain characteristic insistence to her short skirt and to the little lace cap on her head, — an ornament which Edith scarcely regarded as consonant with the simplicity of their suburban *ménage*, but which existed and prevailed (like certain other domestic minutiae) in deference, or at least in acquiescence, to Amanda's harmlessly authoritative habits.

In justice to Amanda, it is to be observed that the garb of black, with the linen and the flip of lace in her hair, was entirely becoming, though this was not a point which really appeared to weigh with her.

That Amanda was, indeed, influenced by certain infrequent but memorable visits to the theatre, appeared in other of her preferences. She had ventured to suggest that Mr.

Tibbetts should wear spats and a house coat with a green quilted lining. Her habit in the announcement of callers likewise was traceable to a sense of the pictorial and the dramatic. She resented the fact that there was not a footman who should be impertinent and whom she should strike playfully with her duster.

But there was nobody but Joe Gribsey, who, singularly, filled no theatrical ideal, and whom she habitually chided for being unkempt and impossible. Joe was her one reservation, — a circumstance in which we may perceive a cheering feminine characteristic.

There was, however, one particular in which Joe soothed, if he did not altogether meet, Amanda's romantic ideals. He wrote frequent and al-

most ardent letters. On this morning Amanda found herself re-reading a letter from Joe that was at least three days old.

“Dear Amanda [it said]: As usual, I have been thinking about you all day. I have quite a headache to-night, so I thought I would write you a few lines.”

“Now that’s what I call silly,” murmured Amanda to herself, “and he calls seven pages a few lines. Huh! A few lines! I wish he had took writin’ lessons. He writes as bad as Mr. Tibbetts. I suppose it’s what they call a business hand.”

“I guess you know, Amanda [the letter continued], that I never think of nobody but you. I don’t think I could if I wanted to. You fill my inmost thoughts. Why that Miss Mitson, the woman artist at the back said yesterday that she was



*"Re-reading a letter  
from Joe."*



## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

very fond of me think of that. You know the one I mean the one that paints cats. I got her a new cat yesterday. She says I would make a good husband for some nice girl."

"The idea!" cried Amanda, and the words might have passed for a salutation, since Joe himself inopportunely appeared at the door, shorn of even his usually primitive effects of special decoration. Evidently he had left the Board of Trade Building in a hurry.

"What's that you're readin', Amanda?"

"None of your business, Joe Gribsey. Tell me right off what on earth you're doin' here? I suppose you'll be discharged before you get back. Anybody'd think you hadn't seen nobody yesterday afternoon."

## THE GIRL & THE GUARDSMAN

“That ain’t answerin’ my question, Amanda. What are you readin’?”

“I told you none of your business.”

Joe rashly seized her about the waist, and sought to catch hold of the letter which she firmly withheld.

“Joe Gribsey, let me go!”

“Let me see the letter, Amanda.”

“I won’t. I told you to let me go — or I’ll use force.”

“After you let me see” —

Amanda had a strong arm, and there was a fine “unhand me” quality in her method of casting off Joe, who contributed a perhaps unexpected grotesqueness to his repulse by sprawling on the floor.

“Well, you need n’t ’a’ been so rough, Amanda,” complained the defeated janitor.

“Then please keep your place,”



“ ‘You need n’t ‘a’ been so  
rough, Amanda!’ ”



observed Amanda, showing him her white teeth.

“I suppose you mean stay here,” growled Joe. “O, I can keep my place! I can take a hint. A person don’t have to explain things so much to me. When I ain’t welcome I can generally tell it. When people don’t want to see me when I come special” —

“Joe Gribsey,” she commanded, “don’t draw a long face, now. Have some sense. What did you come for? I should say you was out of your head comin’ this time of day and riskin’ your place.”

“It ain’t my senses that’s wrong,” complained Joe, appropriating a comparatively remote chair near the door.

“I suppose you mean mine,” re-

torted Amanda, lifting her eyebrows at him.

“No, I don’t; I mean the soldier’s.”

“O! Is he actin’ queer too?”

“I should say so. It beats the cars the way things has been goin’.”

“Since I was there?”

“Yep. This mornin’. First very early comes your Miss Lynwood.”

“Miss Lynwood?”

“Yep. That was funny, was n’t it?”

“I knew it,” remarked Amanda, which was not true; but it was undesirable, for reasons of discipline, that Joe should be flattered by the privilege of conveying too much information.

“Did she tell you?”

“No; of course not. But I knew it.”

“And pretty soon,” Joe went on, “she goes downstairs cryin’.”

“Cryin’?”

“Cryin’ soft to herself. It broke me all up. I was standin’ then in by Morgan’s door. She didn’t see me. Then I found this locket on the steps. I know it’s hers,” added Joe, as Amanda came over to take the trinket from his hand.

“It’s the locket he gave me to take to her,” said Amanda.

“By and by I hear him walkin’ up and down the place. Then when I come upstairs next time it was quiet and I knocked at the door. ‘Come in,’ he says, and there he is sittin’ in front of Miss Lynwood’s picture lookin’ like a ghost for fair this time. ‘I wish you’d get me some breakfast, Joe,’ he says. But

he did n't eat it, and when that Eye-talian feller that sells casts came up he nearly threw him downstairs. By and by he was walkin' and walkin' again. What's up, Amanda? It seems an awful pity."

"What's up?" returned Amanda, with a touch of commiseration for her companion's inferior perceptions. "You can see what's up. They've had words."

"But can't they get over it like us?"

"Amanda!" came the metallic tones of Mr. Tibbetts, who stood somewhat flushed in the doorway.

"Lord! how you frightened me, Mr. Tibbetts!"

"That," declared Mr. Tibbetts, "is because your mind is wander-

ing and your conscience unprepared. Where is my hat?"

"Which hat, Mr. Tibbetts?"

"The soft brown hat."

"With the black band?"

"Yes."

"I don't know, Mr. Tibbetts. I ain't seen it lately."

The old man fidgeted angrily. "You've been cleaning up around here again, I suppose!"

"Mr. Tibbetts, that ain't so. I ain't cleaned nothin'."

Amanda looked resentfully after the retreating figure. "That's the way *he's* been actin'," she sighed to Joe. "What are they all crazy about?"

"I tell you, Amanda," asserted Joe, with a consoling effect, "it's this love business. It makes everybody a little

crazy sooner or later. Mr. Tibbetts is got it like the rest. He's been spoonin' around the widder Willis lately, and I suppose the people in the widder Willis's house is wonderin' what *she's* crazy about."

Amanda grinned appreciatively, an oblique glance of reminiscence in her eyes.

"Anyway, Amanda, I wish we could get this patched up somehow."

"Us?" demanded the girl.

"Yep, why not? Mr. Barton'll just worry me sick if things keep on this way. Look here, Amanda," and Joe hitched his chair nearer to the other into which Amanda had debatingly dropped. "I'll bet it's just like it was with us that time — just a mistake."

Amanda nodded conservatively.

“Very likely,” she said.

“Maybe it’s about that other feller you tell me about.”

She looked at him squarely. “Mr. Hadleigh?”

“Yep.”

“I’ve been thinkin’ that,” said Amanda, judicially. This was not true either, but it was necessary to preserve her priority. “I dare say that’s where the trouble is.” She looked down at the locket. “I wish I knew what to do with this.”

“Won’t you give it to her?”

“I was just thinkin’,” mused Amanda, a sense of grave responsibility in her tone.

At this Mr. Tibbetts reappeared. “Young man,” he said to Joe, “which way are you going when you go?”

“Down Wilton Avenue, sir.”

“I wish,” continued Mr. Tibbetts, his manner indicating some new conviction or resolve, — Amanda wondered whether he had hopelessly abandoned the search for his hat, — “I wish you would deliver this letter for me at the office of the Fordwell Company. It must positively get there before twelve o’clock, understand, or else,” and Mr. Tibbetts bent a severe admonitory glance upon Joe, “you might as well not take it at all. It is very important.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Joe, meekly, as Mr. Tibbetts retreated.

The janitor continued to hold his hand where it had poised itself to receive the silver sop which accompanied the letter. He worked his palm reflectively, grimacing at the dime.

“The old man is very economical, ain’t he, Amanda?”

“Well, he ’d never throw nothin’ away,” admitted the girl. “He ’ll expect you to run your legs off for that.”

“A dime ’s a dime, anyway,” expressed Joe’s philosophy of the moment.

This being sufficiently uncombatable, Amanda contented herself with saying, “Now, you ’d better skip, Joe.”

Joe turned resentfully. “That ’s right, Amanda, chase me out. Well, I can take a hint. Good-bye!”

This was accompanied by one of Joe’s inelegant essays at an embrace.

“Joe Gribsey, let me go!”

“Good-bye, Amanda.”

“I tell you to let me go,” warned

the girl, her head splendidly reserved, and a moment later Joe's voice issued from the back porch. "Well, you need n't 'a' been so rough, Amanda."

But Amanda only smiled her imperturbable smile, watching the young man as he disappeared through the gate.

Then her smile turned to a thoughtful frown. Certainly it was a great pity that matters should be moving in this way. Amanda's admiration for Edith Lynwood had been definite and controlling from the first. It was impossible that any of Amanda's emotions should be accompanied by awe, yet her devotion to Miss Lynwood had in it much of real reverence. Her first impression that it was a lonesome household had not been due to any deficiency in its mis-

tress. Edith had always been cheerful and amiable. The face of that portrait of her mother in the little drawing-room might have prophesied that she would be—Amanda often paused before this face with feelings of large respect. Had Joe Gribsey been less jealous of a sacred security in everything at the studio, she might have seen there something like a new version of the same face.

Perhaps because the portrait of Edith had been painted at the Lynwood house—all save one sitting at the studio—Joe never had had information of the relationship, and, indeed, never until now had seen the portrait uncovered. Amanda's vague information about a lover of Miss Edith's who had not returned from the cruel excursions of war, had

reached her through the lame old man who came every day to work in the garden. Ernst was rich in social and domestic news, and he had made one or two comments on Hadleigh with an allusion to "dead men's shoes" which Amanda regarded as revolting, and said so.

When, after Hadleigh began coming regularly, Amanda had occasionally noticed a strange quiet in Edith, she had taken the liberty of concluding that that first affair must have been very serious indeed. Yet this quiet was not to be compared with the mood that had appeared within the past twenty-four hours — since the soldier came home.

If anything was wrong the soldier was to blame. This was plain enough to Amanda. It came to her

strongly this morning — came a little fiercely when she saw the pitifully white look in Edith's face at the library window where her mistress was mechanically fixing the flowers.

“Miss Edith,” said Amanda, with a defiant tenderness, “you ought to do something for them.”

“For what, Amanda?”

“Them mopes.”

“Mopes?”

“O, I can see you got 'em, Miss Edith. I've had 'em myself,” she added, as if the experience had given her the right to speak with authority.

“What did you do for them, Amanda?”

“Why — I always went to see him — but of course you could n't do that,” Amanda continued, conscious of a deceit.

A softness came momentarily into the fixed lines of Edith's lips.

"And suppose that you went to see him, Amanda, and that it did n't cure them?"

Amanda frowned. "Then I'd make him come and see me, and I'd keep it up. There ain't nothing else to do, Miss Edith. Men is strange animals, anyway. Joe Gribsey's just been here."

"Has he, Amanda?" Edith had turned away from the window, and paused again. As if to conceal the origin of this emotion of interest, she added, "Why did n't you call me? Then I might have believed that there is such a person."

"Well, he was here," Amanda proceeded, "and he says the soldier's actin' very queer, walkin' up and

down, starin' at your picture, throwin' Eytalians downstairs, and not eatin' a bite of food."

"You will have to prescribe for him too, Amanda."

"O, I daresay he needs a dressin' down," returned Amanda. "When a man gets the mopes you have to be rough with him. Gentleness don't go."

Whether she felt that it was time to withdraw, or feared to trust the rising tide of her resentment against the soldier, Amanda went away, leaving Edith standing by the window, standing in that restless stillness which dulls the edge of courage and wears the patience of the heart.

Perhaps Edith's dominant feeling was one of bitter disappointment. Without the master key to the situ-

ation — without knowledge of the grotesque chance by which the situation had been created — Barton's conduct could not seem otherwise than inexplicable. He appeared to be yielding to impulses that might well have been adjudged too small to master him. The tragic story of his death had been a blinding blow. In that hour how trite and inadequate had been every conventionality of consolation ! How she had hated every note of commiseration ! How she had rebelled — and bent, under the blow ! Then she had been forced to face the different distress of the Hadleigh mistake — the mistake of believing that her high friendship for him was sufficient. It had taken what seemed like the last of her courage to frame the clumsy dismissal

of his claims as a lover. But was not this the worst of all — to find Barton so poor in charity for her, ready to make so mean an estimate of her faith, ready to condemn and to stab without a hearing? It was so *little*, so disenchanting. It was the old story. The dead in whom we believe are less a sorrow than the living who have hurt our faith.

“My dear!”

Mr. Tibbetts revealed himself in a condition of restrained excitement. He was one of those in whom the counterfeit of calm is always grotesquely transparent. At the present moment Mr. Tibbetts was putting on his hat and taking it off again (for whatever reason, it was his silk hat), looking at his watch and putting the thing back into his pocket, slowly,

as if he were debatively relinquishing the minutes.

Edith, without speaking, crossed the room with a dull steadiness and straightened her uncle's tie.

"My dear," repeated Mr. Tibbetts, "I shall be back in a little while." He was looking over her shoulder. "I have some business in the city."

Edith nodded and recrossed the room. Her uncle paused at the door.

"I want to see you when I get back," he continued, "about — about a little matter. In fact, about something of much importance."

The girl turned with a languid curiosity.

"You will be here, Edith?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Eh — I'm afraid, my dear, that you are upset a little by this news —



*"Her uncle paused  
at the door."*



extraordinary news, is it not? — that Barton is back.”

“I shall get over it, uncle,” she said quietly.

“It is very extraordinary,” repeated Mr. Tibbetts.

Then Edith heard his feet stammer in the hall.



## Part Seven



**J**OE came into the studio diffidently. Joe had no habitual diffidence. He was not without his own sort of sensibility, but his imagination never anticipated disaster. With regard to the case of Barton, he felt that grave crises impended. Distressing things already had happened, and doubtless there was further trouble ahead.

“You better eat something, after all, Mr. Barton,” he ventured to say.

“The band ain’t playin’ now, and you can’t go with so little.”

Barton was lying on a couch in a corner of his studio, trying to pull himself together. The effort continued to call up monumental difficulties. He felt as if the bottom had dropped out of the world, and as if he had an exceedingly insecure grip on the sides thereof.

For an hour after Edith’s visit he had been too dazed and crushed to think. Wounded to the quick, exasperated with fate, disappointed with himself, mystified by a sense of something fantastically perverse and unreal in the disaster which had overwhelmed him, he found himself weighted by an unconquerable stupor.

He had called himself many and various hard names. He also had

made some uncomplimentary remarks to certain intruders. At one moment he called this the fever. At another he called it his natural depravity. Neither conclusion gave him any comfort.

There was no gratification in abusing Gribsey, for Joe took it all with real grief.

"Let me alone, Joe," returned Barton to Gribsey's suggestion about food. "I'll be all right after a while."

"Maybe," remarked Joe. "But I say, when in doubt, eat."

"By and by, Joe."

Gribsey contemplated the soldier with a serious eye, as if to penetrate the pathology of the situation.

"That lady in there that paints cats," pursued Joe, "says that what

you need is something to build up your strength. She says you're all run down."

"What does she suggest?" demanded Barton, in a tone that gave Gribsey a fresh anxiety.

Joe faltered backward a step. "Baked p'taters, she says."

"I hate potatoes," growled Barton, "especially baked potatoes, and above all, baked potatoes suggested by a lady who paints cats."

"O," ejaculated Joe. "I don't think you're so much run down as you are upset. Something or other," put forward the janitor with a meaning emphasis, "has just knocked you over."

"I guess you're right, Joe. And I don't think you can do anything for me. Don't worry. Go and see

your Amanda Maud —if that's her name."

"I did," responded Joe briskly.  
"I just been."

"O, you have, have you?" Barton looked up.

"And she says that Miss Lynwood's actin' just about as queer as you are."

"She does, does she? What a shame!" Barton got himself out of the couch. "Joe, I guess the world's going queer. Except you and Amanda, and the lady who paints cats, I can't see that any of us is just right. To tell you the truth, I'm going to get into some other clothes and take a turn outdoors somewhere. And let me give you a friendly word of advice, Joe." Barton swung about with a look



“What does she suggest?”  
demanded Barton.”



quite unreadable to the janitor : “ If you ever happen to die, *stay dead*.”

Finding it impossible, by any unaided effort of mind, to interpret practically the larger meanings of this counsel, Gribsey silently went away.

In a few moments he came back.

“ A young lady from the *Express* is looking for you, Mr. Barton.”

“ Tell her I ’m dead,” said Barton, from behind the curtain of the dressing-room.

Joe debated between a grin and a frown.

“ She knows you got back.”

“ Tell her I was found dead — again — this morning.”

Joe backed to the door. “ O, well, she ’ll want to see you, anyhow. She ’s got a camera.”

“Then tell her they are dressing the corpse and to come back in an hour.”

Nevertheless, the young lady from the *Express* came back in fifteen minutes, and Barton, wearing a garb to which the exigencies of war long had made him a stranger, let her in.

He recognized her as little Miss Price, who was not very clever, but who was always likably frank and energetic.

“Mr. Barton!” she cried, with genuine feeling. “I’m so glad to see you!”

“Sorry to spoil your story,” said Barton, “about the hero business and death among the Filipinos.”

“O, but you were a hero — and you are a hero more than ever now,” insisted Miss Price. “How delighted

all your family and friends must be! Won't you tell me all about it? Have you got time to tell me something for to-day's *Express*?"

"I'm afraid I have n't," replied Barton. "You see I'm feeling pretty seedy yet. After the fever, you know" —

"But you must tell me how you were captured — O, we had that! I mean what they did with you and how you got away. Were the savages very cruel? How on earth did they come to report you killed? — I mean the officials. We had a dreadful half-tone of you — we have been working half-tones for a year now. They are getting up a better one for this afternoon. We only heard about it this morning somehow. Wasn't it telegraphed at all?"

“There was a mix-up,” said Barton. “The despatches killed the wrong man.”

“I thought,” ventured Miss Price, “that I might find you in your khaki, and that maybe I could get a little special portrait of you here.”

“You must let me off to-day,” returned Barton. “I’ve just shed my troop clothes. I’m sick of them!”

“But you will let us have your belt and carbine, or something for the office window.”

“If you like — if you will let that go instead of the story. I have n’t the carbine, but I have my cartridge belt and revolver. The United States sold those to me.”

“*Sold* them to you!” cried Miss Price, resentfully. “The idea!”

Barton laid the trophies before her, and she examined them with great reverence.

“You *don't* look well,” she said, a few moments later.

“Probably not,” returned Barton.

“You will let me put down a few dates, won't you?” Miss Price pleaded.

Barton quickly sketched the chronology of his military life — that was short work, after all. Two months or six months are words quickly said. The things they stand for in bodily suffering, in deferred hopes, in tortured patience, in bruised spirit, are another matter.

Barton watched her languidly as she wrote in the little book, and when at last she had thanked him, and had gone, the belt, half filled with Krag

cartridges, and the revolver under her arm, he threw himself into the chair before his writing-desk determined to write one or two letters.

He was in the middle of the first letter, when there was another knock, and Hadleigh came in.

“This is very reckless, Hadleigh,” he said, grasping his friend’s hand — the wounded arm hung in the sling. “You should be in bed, I suspect.”

“Nonsense, Barton. It is nothing — though I don’t take that view of it with regard to that young devil who popped at me. They’ve got him — that’s the end of that.”

“Not for him,” suggested Barton. “Sit down, Hadleigh. I hope you have n’t forgotten how to be at home here. Have a pipe — I’ll fill it for you.”

“Never mind the pipe,” said Hadleigh. “I have n’t reformed or anything like that. But I ’m not up to a pipe this morning.”

“How ’s the arm?”

“Good enough. If I had n’t tumbled like a fool, and bled there, it would n’t be worth mentioning. And if I had n’t got your compress when I did I probably should have had the queer luck to knock under altogether.”

“Looks as if Providence had n’t finished putting us through stunts,” said Barton, striding into the far corner and out of it again.

Hadleigh looked about him with something in his eyes that contradicted his voice. “I was in here one day — about a month ago,” he said.

“So Joe was saying,” nodded Barton.

“And it gave me a lump in the throat, Ed, to look around the place and to think that you never would come back. I left orders once more that your directions should be respected, and that the place should be untouched until Fanter came back from Munich. We wrote your obituary, old man.”

“And said things a live man never can live up to.”

“I did n’t see anything that was put on too heavy.”

“Probably,” said Barton, with a smile, “that picture in the *Express* — Joe had it to show me — helped even up things. I don’t suppose you *could* speak too well of a man with that portrait in sight.”

“An outrage,” muttered Hadleigh.

“I am to be done again to-day,” Barton added. “Writ up, and drawn — limb from limb — and my toys hung in the window. We are whooping things, Hadleigh, for you will be in, too, with the would-be assassin. Think of it. I am to play two rôles—the returned hero and the rescuer. Could anything be more engaging—more completely satisfying?”

“I see you are not well yet, Barton.”

“I ’m well enough.”

“If they would only let well enough alone. Here I am bothering you like the rest.”

Barton shook his head protestingly. “I guess you know how welcome you are, Hadleigh.”

“When I was here that day,” Hadleigh then went on, “I had the curiosity to lift the curtain from the picture here. I had seen it before, you remember. It did n’t mean the same thing then. The situation had changed—very much.”

Barton was silent, though he moved his head protestingly.

“Barton,” continued Hadleigh, looking straight before him into the corner, “there is something I have come to speak to you about. Of course we could n’t get at it yesterday very well. I was your friend, and I am your friend, and I have the rights of a friend. So I am here now.”

Barton twisted in his chair.

“When you went away to Manila,” said Hadleigh, still speaking into the

corner, "you were engaged to be married to Edith Lynwood."

Barton got up, wrenching the chair with his hand. "Hadleigh," he returned firmly, "you were my friend, and you are my friend, and you will please change the subject."

"No, Barton, you must not ask that. There is something I have come to say. I have the right to say it. I shall say it."

"Even at my expense, Hadleigh? Even if I insist that I have the right to ask you not to say it?"

Hadleigh faced about in his chair. "Look here, Barton, some things won't wait for settlement. And there are other rights than yours and mine."

"As for that, Hadleigh, those other rights will not be imperilled

by your silence at this time. I know all that you would say to me. Believe me, those things need not be said. The occasion is past."

Barton had seated himself on the edge of the couch.

"Past?" Hadleigh looked up. "Past? How can the occasion be past?"

"Nevertheless," retorted Barton, sternly, "it is past."

"Suppose I thought differently, Barton." Hadleigh arose and lifted his hand. "I see that you are not well to-day, Barton. God knows, you have had a tough time of it. I understand" —

"You would do wrong to think differently," broke in the other, his face white. "You should take my word — without forcing me to say



“ ‘ You should take  
my word.’ ”



more. I have spoken very plainly. I have said that — that there is nothing to be said.”

For several moments there was silence between them. Barton was breathing heavily. Hadleigh stood near the veiled portrait, his eyes set upon the tortured face of his friend. Then he spoke again.

“Barton, I went to see her this morning. It was very early. I had n’t been able to sleep — not for the arm, but for thinking of this thing. She was not at home. The girl didn’t know where she had gone, but I got it into my head somehow that she had come here.”

“She did come here.”

“And if she came here,” proceeded Hadleigh, resolutely, “her coming was not without a meaning

—a meaning which I have the right to read. Though I were not your friend, Barton, I still should not wish to claim the hand of a girl who loved another. She loves you, Barton ” —

“ Hadleigh, listen to me.” Barton arose, his arms crossed. “ You have claimed the rights of a friend. You have urged other rights than your own. Consider, then, whether you are acting the part of reason and justice and friendship in refusing to listen to me when I, who confess to having seen her, tell you that you have no occasion to place this matter before me, that — that you are mistaken, *mistaken*, understand me, in questioning her love for you.”

Hadleigh stirred as if to speak, but the other checked him.

“I have loved her, Hadleigh, and surely that gives me the right to demand of you an unquestioning fulfilment of all—all that lies in your pledge to her.” Barton made an authoritative gesture. “Can’t you see the cruelty of discussing this with me?”

“I can see but one thing,” returned Hadleigh evenly, with something both of pity and of defiance in his tone, “and that is that I have come between you. If I am privileged to love her, Barton, I am privileged to resent the thought of a stigma, of any accidental advantage. I am not blind. I know what has gone before. I know that you are not a man to love lightly. I know that you are not a man whom any woman would love lightly. I know what

a blunder in such a matter must mean for everybody, not only for the man and the woman, but for — for the other man. You choose to ask the impossible — something that you would n't ask of an enemy — that he should pass over, put aside, ignore what can't be ignored ” —

“Look here, Hadleigh.” Barton came over and put his hands on the other's shoulders. “I understand you. I thank you. I believe you are my friend. You are worthy of more than friendship. But look at me. Am I fit to be reasoned with? Am I fit to give or to take? Just drop me to-day. You are doing yourself an injustice — you are doing us all an injustice. What has happened, has happened. Each of us has his duty. In God's name let us

find it if we can. But leave it to me to say that now is not the time. Believe me when I tell you : she has spoken."

"She has spoken?" repeated Hadleigh.

"Yes," affirmed Barton.

Hadleigh bowed his head, then held out his hand.

When presently he turned to go he found Mr. Tibbetts standing uneasily on the threshold.

## Part *Eight*



**M**R. TIBBETTS experienced a moment of awkward suspense on encountering Barton. Perhaps he had expected to rehearse some things

a little further before formally knocking at the door. There had been time for rehearsal, too, but no one possibly can tell just what he wishes or requires to say until he faces the menace of a door.

On the hallway side of Barton's door hung a slate and a tethered pencil. When you knocked and got no answer you were at liberty to leave your written card on the slate; and, if you suspected his unanswering presence, you might add, in a bold, indignant hand that he was an ungrateful, unsociable, deceiving scoundrel or other mild reproach for his silence, and go away.

Mr. Tibbetts stood looking at the slate for fully two minutes, and might have endured three before defiantly knocking, had not Hadleigh opened the door to go out.

“Good-morning,” said Barton, in a voice that did not increase Mr. Tibbetts's personal comfort. “Have a chair.”

“Good-morning, Barton,” returned

the visitor, with a furtive glance at the artist as he said a last word to Hadleigh in the hall.

“Fine morning,” resumed Barton, as he turned back. His tone was sufficient to lower the temperature.

“Yes,” admitted Mr. Tibbetts taking tentative possession of the extreme edge of one of Barton’s dwarfed black chairs, “though a little cool, I think, for this time of year.”

“Is it? I had n’t noticed,” remarked Barton, striking a match sullenly. “I’m mixed on all weather propositions — been in so many longitudes and latitudes — and lost the track of seasons so long that I can’t measure up the weather any more.”

“Yes,” ventured the visitor. “That’s natural too — quite natural.

I — I hope you are feeling very well, Barton.”

“I can’t say,” replied the younger man, “that I am in the pink of condition. I have felt better, though I am doing fairly. Possibly I owe you an apology, Mr. Tibbetts, for my continued health.”

“Don’t be hard on me, Barton. I have had a bad night. This thing took a turn I did not expect, and I did not think the consequences could be so — so serious. I would make amends if I could. Please God, I shall make amends. It isn’t too late — at least I hope it isn’t too late.”

Barton shifted his feet and stared into the bowl of his pipe. “I don’t see what amends you can make, Mr. Tibbetts. I don’t understand. Your

anxiety to keep me out of sight until twelve o'clock to-day was unnecessary after all."

"Ah, Barton! you never will understand how I intended that. You make it appear very brutal. It was just an impulse, you know. It did n't seem at the first as if it could make any great difference — how could I know that it would make any difference? And you did n't listen to me — no, I'm not saying a word of blame."

"You are right," admitted Barton, "I did n't listen to you."

"Listen to me now, Barton. I so despised myself for that selfish weakness" —

"Don't speak of it, Mr. Tibbetts."

"I will speak of it, Barton. I must tell you that I sent a message

this morning declining the election. I could n't bring myself" —

"I'm sorry," declared Barton. "You can't mend anything by giving up a great business opportunity. You should think of — of Edith."

"Yes, I know, Barton; it is like you to put it that way. But she never would forgive me if she knew" —

"Nonsense," Barton interposed, "why should she know? What difference does it make — now? It looks to me, Mr. Tibbetts, as if you were going to a lot of useless trouble to make yourself miserable."

The old man was twisting his hat between his hands. "Nevertheless," he proceeded, with a narrow scrutiny of the artist, "I have made my decision. Now I have come to ask you a favor."

“Well,” said Barton, getting up, not without a sign of impatience, “if it is something short of suicide I believe I will grant it this time, just to change my luck.”

“I want you, Barton,” Mr. Tibbetts continued, hewing to the mark, “I want you to help me straighten out this — this ” —

“Straightening out, Mr. Tibbetts, doesn’t seem to be exactly in my line just now. I think perhaps you are laboring under an error ” —

“It is you, Barton, who are laboring under an error. My boy, you are on the wrong track.” This was accompanied by a constrained effort to smile. “The wrong track, my boy.”

“I’m not on any track,” retorted Barton. “I’m off the track, down

the embankment, head on, telescoped, deep in the mud."

"Wait a moment, Barton, wait a moment. I say you are wrong. You have made a mistake. *She* has made a mistake. It's a ridiculous mess of a mistake all the way through. I can prove it. I shall prove it. You shall let me prove it."

"Prove it? Prove what?"

"Barton, you must come with me" —

"Not to the" —

"Yes, to the house. — Hold on! You shall come with me and let me prove" —

Both men were standing, the older with a flushed face and an importuning hand extended; the younger showing a kind of wearied scorn with something of a fierce humor.

“Really, Mr. Tibbetts,” interrupted Barton, “I find it hard to follow you. You are so unexpected. We each have our own notion of a joke. I somehow lost your point yesterday. To-day you are even more perplexing. Why not let the matter drop? I’m not holding any grudge against you. I have annoyed you by being alive when I should have stayed dead. If I had it all to do again I should try to arrange it differently. But that can’t be helped now. You have agreed not to hold any grudge against me. I ask nothing of you. Why not let the case rest there?”

The old man drew his lips together and glared at Barton, with a moist fury.

“Damn it, Barton! Don’t you understand! I tell you this whole

thing's a mistake. Edith was under a misapprehension — and you were all wrong — and — but you won't believe me. I can do better. I can prove it. But I must ask you to come with me. Is that unreasonable? Is proof so unimportant to you? Are you so tremendously happy that" —

"O, you could n't fancy how solicitous every one is for my comfort and happiness," flung Barton, striking another match. "It has touched me deeply."

Mr. Tibbetts stood hopelessly silent for a moment, still twisting his hat.

"Barton, do you mean to say" —

The artist interrupted him. "Mr. Tibbetts, if you have any regret for anything that you have done —

though I assure you I can't see how you are to blame for — anything that has happened — why, ask me some other sort of favor."

"You refuse to go, Barton?"

The younger man shrugged his shoulders. "You must not ask me to go, Mr. Tibbetts. I never could straighten out anything for you. I'm not feeling that way just now. I'd only make everything worse for you."

Mr. Tibbetts walked to the door with a quick step, his hands behind him. He paused for a few seconds under the Turkish blade. Then he caught at the door and went out quickly.

Once in the street he proceeded to take a turn around the square. He must think of some other way

of reaching Barton. The one sure way to make matters right was to bring them together — Edith and Barton — somehow. But what was to be done with a fellow so incorrigible as Barton? The very man who most needed a convincing demonstration of his error was the man who would not make the conditions possible.

During Mr. Tibbetts's circuit of the square, and while Barton stood at the door pondering grimly upon the grotesque procession of his day's visitors, and how, indeed, he might hope to find the peace that seemed to have gone from him beyond recall, there was another tap on the door. He nervously started, frowned at his weakness and stood rebelliously motionless, determined in the first

moment to refer this new intruder to the slate.

The tap was repeated shortly with a sharp interrogatory emphasis that seized his attention and held it. Something in the sound made him think it had been produced by a woman.

However this feeling may have influenced him, he suddenly growled, "Come in!"

It was Amanda Maud, wearing the same light dress she had worn the day before, and a curiously casual, boyish soft hat, in which there was an adjustment purely Amanda's own.

Amanda did not seem startled to find Barton at the brink of the room, his hand against the wall, looking quietly at her as she came out of the passage.



*"It was Amanda  
Maud."*



“Good-morning,” said Amanda.

“Good-morning,” returned Barton, without moving. “The artist is in.”

“So I see,” ventured Amanda. “Don’t you think you could ask me in for just a minute?”

“You’ve got to come in,” declared Barton. “I’ve been wishing you’d come. It has been so dull here to-day.”

Amanda measured him with her undismayed eyes. He was pretty hard to understand.

“I just dropped in,” she said, “to say that” —

“Don’t apologize,” insisted Barton. “It’s all right.”

“Is it?” She watched him as he searched through the pigeon-holes of the old desk for something which

it had occurred to him to look for. "Well, I wanted to say, if you'll excuse me, that you're an awful fool."

Barton turned about slowly.

"Now, do you know," he said, "I am hardly prepared to contradict you."

"You know what I mean," went on Amanda, "any man might be taken that way."

"In that case," said Barton, turning again to the pigeon-holes, "I needn't take the thing as so personal, I needn't feel so badly."

"I don't want to make nobody feel bad," said Amanda, "and I know it ain't none of my business, but I just took it into my head"—

"To come and tell me I was a fool," returned Barton. "It is very pleasant and thoughtful of you."

“O, wait!” commanded the girl, “I did come to say that, because you *are*. I guess you know you are. You don’t suppose I’d ever believe *she* was wrong, do you?”

The girl walked to the middle of the floor. Barton faced her, a mingling of annoyance and amusement in his eyes. It came to him to wonder at the moment whether everything that was happening actually had a fantastic flavor, or whether his abnormal condition was twisting the ordinary and reasonable into these peculiar shapes.

“Go on,” he said. “You’ve come to say something. Say it. I’m listening, and I’m very much interested.”

“I know how you men are,” pursued Amanda, with some sign of

debate as to her procedure. "You get a thing into your head and nobody can get it out. You can't get it out yourselves. It just gets wedged in."

"Well?" queried Barton. "Is this what you came to tell me?"

"Yep," said Amanda, shortly, — "and to hand you this."

Barton stared at the locket which she placed in his palm. It *was* the locket.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "Did n't you" — then he checked himself. She must have delivered it, for Edith had held it.

"It seems to me," remarked Amanda by a master stroke of evasion, "that if I was a man, and I had a locket handed to me like this, and I was told to *come*, I

would know by that that I was to come."

"Do you mean" — began Barton.

But Amanda could trust herself no further. She had reached the end of her device, and she fled without another syllable, leaving Barton to stare at the little gleaming symbol in his hand.

The haste of Amanda's departure might well have been attended with serious consequences, for in the dim light of the landing she ran full against Mr. Tibbetts. It was only by the quick strength of her own plump right hand that a real catastrophe was averted.

"Amanda!" was all that the old man had breath to say as he peered after her into the depths of the stairway.

Barton heard the scuffle through his open door, though in the sudden whirl of a new and startling thought it may scarcely be said to have definitely drawn his attention.

The locket and a summons! This was as absurdly grotesque as all the rest.

When Mr. Tibbetts, panting from the climb and the collision, and a trifle dishevelled, strode to the execution of his last appeal, determined to lay everything before Barton, he found the artist incomprehensibly paused with his back to the door.

“Barton” — began the old man.

The artist slipped something into the pocket of his coat, strode across the studio and reached for a hat that hung upon a deer’s antlers. The hat was covered with dust, and Barton

struck it across the edge of the couch, then brushed it absently with his sleeve.

“Mr. Tibbetts,” he said when he had faced about, “I should like to go out home with you, if you don’t mind.”



## Part

## *Nine*

**I**T was Amanda Maud's conviction that she had left the house unobserved on this sensational excursion. But the supposition was inaccurate. Edith saw her steal across the garden and out of the lane gate. She also saw the girl return after an inexplicable hour; and presently Amanda took occasion to be audibly and visibly present about the house. Her transition to

the house dress was one of those paradoxes of feminine celerity over which even Edith might have marvelled had she been more alert to impressions.

The fact is that Amanda's departure had aroused neither her curiosity nor her resentment — it was absence without leave — for at the moment Edith was incapable of holding a normal attitude toward anything that passed about her. Since the initial catastrophe of the day before, when, after a period of wretched debate, she had, as she believed, sent Hadleigh away, perhaps in anger, a harsh unreality had begun to appear in everything that happened. Barton's first note regarding Hadleigh's injuries, scrawled on the back of her own paper, which lay on the hall table

when she came in after a half-hour's absence, produced an effect which its writer could not have expected. It was simply incredible. Indeed, it evoked an hysterical laugh. It was the note with the locket which Amanda handed to her so soon after, that completed the circuit of this terrible new reality and left her dazed and helpless.

She went to her writing table and read again the lines he had sent to her.

I no longer have the right to carry this trinket. If, in sending it back, I am tempted to say that in all my suffering it has been a sign to me of something to which it now seems that I was wrong in holding fast, you must not take this for reproach or bitterness. I should have fallen without it. I must not forget that. What you have done you have

believed to be right. I must not forget that either.

EDWIN BARTON.

This was what she had lived with for the whole of a night, until the deliberate dawn released her to the action of another day. When she had stolen away to the studio, it was to verify by the contact of her senses the incredible tragedy of this change.

After that everything had ended. Nothing was what it had been. She did not recognize herself. Amanda, watching her stealthily, plainly was caught up by the whimsical current of the transformation. Uncle Amos was a parody of himself.

The hall clock was striking noon when Edith found herself pinning on her hat. She was startled by her own face in the mirror. When she

reached the porch she knew that she was going to see Hadleigh. Somehow that had begun to seem like a duty. She had humiliated herself to Barton. She herself would follow the sympathetic note she had sent to Hadleigh. She would contradict, at whatever cost, any suspicion Hadleigh might have of her want of feeling; she would show him that if friendship could fall into error, it could be steadfast, that if it hurt in being true to itself, it could bind up the resulting wound with an affectionate and a patient hand.

After all, Hadleigh was not at home. His mother, looking into Edith's white face, said he had insisted on going into the city, and possibly had gone from there to the works. They had regretted not



*"Nothing was what  
it had been."*



being able to detain him. Would n't Edith sit down a while?

No, she had come to ask after his wound. Evidently he was better. But he should be careful.

As briefly as might be, Edith received Mrs. Hadleigh's motherly questioning, met the motherly eyes that read the trouble behind her own, and turned homeward again her heart deadly heavy, her head throbbing.

"She is n't quiet a minute!" murmured Amanda at the dining-room window when she saw Edith at the gate. "Somebody'll just have to put her to bed."

Mr. Tibbetts and Barton came out on the trolley.

Mr. Tibbetts became more and more chipper in a momentum of

altruistic satisfaction. It seemed to him that he looked over at the chimneys of the works without a twinge. He had made a great sacrifice, but he had made a splendid atonement.

He poured out upon Barton a flood of local gossip without observing that the artist yielded but indifferent attention to the narrative. From gossip he turned to reminiscence, and he was in the midst of a joke — rather disjointedly put forward — about the time they went fishing over to Pine Lake, when they came in sight of the house.

At this Mr. Tibbetts's genial excitement visibly rose.

“Barton, you'll be in time for dinner! — we still dine in the middle of the day, you know.”

Barton was enigmatically silent.

“O, I’ve got a surprise for you, my boy! Going to do it my own way. No wrangling, no argument, no trying to force you to understand. Just you wait.”

“I’ve been sufficiently surprised,” was all that Barton would say to this. He did not trust Tibbetts. He would not — at least on that day — have accepted entry into the finest prospect the old man might have promised to him. But the locket . . .

Mr. Tibbetts had not planned the details of his atoning interview. He was too confident to feel the need for any subtlety of approach. Undoubtedly it was, in the legal phrase, simply a case of bringing the parties together.

“Edith! Where are you?” he all

but shouted as soon as they were within the house.

Amanda stood at the top of the stair. "Miss Edith's in the sitting-room, Mr. Tibbetts."

Barton winced at Tibbetts's exuberant precipitation. Yet this was a contradictory emotion, for, now that he was in the house, now that he stood so near her again, he could have brushed the old man aside and sprung into her presence without weighing anything.

As it was, he fell behind Tibbetts, saw the old man part the curtains, and heard him call his niece's name again.

"Yes, uncle."

The girl answered absently, expecting nothing more exciting or momentous than some fretful inquiry.

But Mr. Tibbetts went on in a restrained excitement which could not at once have appeared to the girl. "Edith, I wish to say a word to you about yesterday."

"I wish you would not speak of it, uncle," was her wearily resentful answer, and Barton longed for the privilege of projecting some large, heavy object at the old man's head.

"I must, Edith," continued Mr. Tibbetts, crossing and recrossing the room. "A great injustice has been done and I am to blame?"

"You, uncle?"

Edith, her chin on her hand, was staring out of the window.

The old man turned to make a gesture which commanded Barton to enter the room. His face wore a

gayety of excitement reflecting his estimate of this procedure as a stroke of genius.

“You told him, Edith,” pursued Mr. Tibbetts, coming close to her and finally taking a seat near by, “you told him that you could not receive him again as your lover, that you could not marry him, because” —

“Because I did not love him, uncle.”

“Yes, yes, and you went further.”

“I said that I really had loved but one man” —

“Yes, Edith.”

“And that I never could love any but him.”

“Ah, yes, but he did n’t hear you say that, because he went away, which was very foolish of him, very foolish, and entirely to his own blame. No-

body told him to go. And, Edith, — I want to have this very plain — when you spoke of the one man — the one man you really had loved you know ” — Mr. Tibbetts put his hand gently upon her arm — “ you meant ” —

“ I meant my soldier.”

“ Barton, yes, yes. Then you were talking to ” —

Edith turned her drawn face toward that of her uncle. “ Why are you rambling in this way, uncle? Did you not see Marcus go? ”

“ Then you were sending away Hadleigh — Hadleigh, whom you had expected to meet ” —

“ I was telling him that I did not love him, uncle — and to think that he should go away in that mood and be hurt ! ”

Mr. Tibbetts felt rather than saw Barton's movement. He sprang up.

"But suppose, my dear, suppose that it was not Hadleigh who heard you, suppose that an old scoundrel of an uncle who did n't intend it, but somehow did do it, let you think that it was Hadleigh, and that it was" —

She had caught the look in his eye, and drew herself tremblingly out of the chair until she discovered Barton, pale, stupefied, in the middle of the floor.

"Edwin!"

"My God!" cried Barton, with something like a sob as he caught her. "Then all of my fever dreams are over!"

He held her strongly as if in a sudden fear that it was a trick, kissing her lips, her eyes, her hair.

“Ahem!” came from Mr. Tibbetts.

For an instant Barton, imprisoning Edith’s head on his shoulder, looked over at the old man.

“Go on, Barton,” urged Tibbetts catching the look. “Don’t spare my feelings. Say it—say what you are thinking of me—I *am* a damned scoundrel.”

But somehow Barton only smiled and kissed Edith again, after putting her away at arm’s length for a moment, and drawing her close once more in an ecstasy of possession.

“You have spoken, uncle,” said Edith with the old twinkle in her eyes that made Barton to understand that she was a dream come true.

“Though I will say” — began Uncle Amos at the door.

“Yes, I know,” nodded Barton.

And Uncle Amos quietly went out.

Almost at the same moment, Amanda Maud, suspiciously unembarrassed, appeared at the other door.

“O, dear !” she cried, “that fool of a Joe Gribsey’s gone and forgotten this letter, and it was tremenjus important, Mr. Tibbetts said.”

Barton held out his hand for the letter Amanda had found on the back porch, upon which the sitting-room windows opened. It bore the address of the Fordwell Company.

“When did he give it to Joe?” asked Barton.

“This morning — about an hour and a half ago, I guess. He told him it was in a hurry and would n’t

be no use unless it was delivered before twelve o'clock."

"I see," said Barton, tearing up the unopened letter. "It's after twelve o'clock now—and this is better than Uncle Amos deserves."

"Did I hear my name?" asked Uncle Amos, returning.

"You did," admitted Barton. "I was saying that it is better than you deserve. There is your declination of the Vice-Presidency in small pieces on the floor. It is after twelve o'clock, and you are elected. So am I. Let us forget everything that is disagreeable."

"My dear boy," cried Uncle Amos, coming forward with outstretched hands.

"It's all right," said Barton. "The world's coming to its old senses."

“Shall we go in to dinner?” asked Edith. “Of course I can’t eat” —

It was thus that Barton came to dine in his old place, with Edith to look at, as on that day before he joined his troop. There was so much to talk about that Amanda Maud found occasion to remark to herself that some folks did n’t seem to know what victuals were for. Uncle Amos repeatedly sought to reassure himself that everything was, as Barton had said, “all right.”

“You can see how it happened, Barton!” he would say.

It was while they had the grapes that Uncle Amos was observed suddenly to have become very quiet.

“What are you thinking about, uncle?” demanded Edith.

“I was just thinking, my dear,



*“It is after twelve o’clock,  
and you are elected.”*



that your mother was married in October."

Edith laughed a soft, happy laugh, and Barton getting up quickly, came around the table and kissed her three times.

Hadleigh walked up the path with something of the soldier tread, a resolute look in his face.

They saw him from the library window. Edith, rising quickly, placed her hand on Barton's shoulder to indicate that he should remain where he was, and hurried to the door.

Presently — Barton could not have measured the interval, for his thoughts went wide as the minutes ran — they came back together, Edith and Hadleigh.

Without a word the two men

clasped hands. Then Hadleigh spoke. "I have just been telling Edith," he said, with a shadowed smile, "that the Company wishes me to make a trip to Oregon. Just as soon as this arm is well I shall be going."

"And I have been telling him," murmured Edith, speaking to Barton, her hand resting gently on Hadleigh's arm, "that near or far he always will be the noblest of friends."







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